



CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND CHINA'S INFLUENCE DURING  
THE KHMER ROUGE ERA (1975-1979)

BY

MR. SAMNANG UN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (ASIA-PACIFIC STUDIES)

THAMMASAT INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES

THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2018

COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND CHINA'S INFLUENCE DURING  
THE KHMER ROUGE ERA (1975-1979)

BY

MR. SAMNANG UN



A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (ASIA-PACIFIC STUDIES)  
THAMMASAT INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2018  
COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
THAMMASAT INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES

THESIS

BY

MR. SAMNANG UN

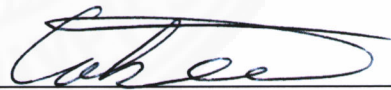
ENTITLED

CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND CHINA'S INFLUENCE  
DURING THE KHMER ROUGE ERA (1975-1979)

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts (Asia Pacific Studies)

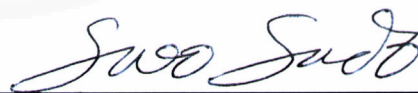
on ..... **2 6 DEC 2018** .....

Chairman



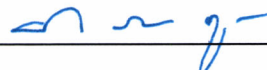
(Lecturer Takashi Tsukamoto, Ph.D.)

Member and Advisor



(Professor Suelo Suelo, Ph.D.)

Member



(Lecturer Saikaew Thipakorn, Ph.D.)

Director



(Associate Professor Suphat Suphachalasai, Ph.D.)

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Thesis Title                   | CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND CHINA'S INFLUENCE DURING THE KHMER ROUGE ERA (1975-1979)               |
| Author                         | Mr. Samnang Un   |
| Degree                         | Master of Arts (Asia-Pacific Studies)  |
| Major Field/Faculty/University | Master of Arts (Asia-Pacific Studies)<br>Thammasat Institute of Area Studies<br>Thammasat University |
| Thesis Advisor                 | Professor Sueo Sudo, Ph.D.   |
| Academic Year                  | 2018   |

## ABSTRACT

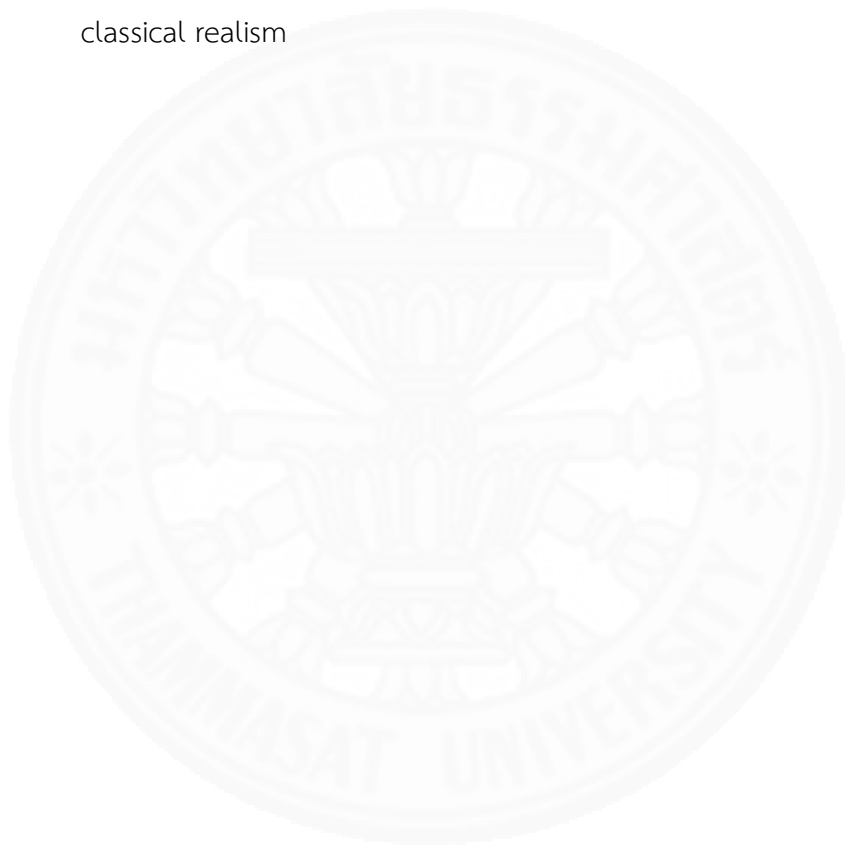
The paper aims at exploring the influence of China on Cambodia's foreign policy formulation and implementation, with a particular focus on the extent its foreign aid contributed to Cambodian-Vietnamese hostility during the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) era, notorious for the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror from 1975 to 1979.

To achieve this objective, it will employ a retrospective and exploratory research design with mixed methods, including content and historical analysis, archive research, retrospect perspectives and interviews with four Cambodian specialists. Drawing on neoclassical realism for its theoretical framework, the study will focus chiefly on three vital variables- external environment, Pol Pot's perception and domestic factors- to identify and analyse the reasons behind Pol Pot's heavy dependence on China and the fragmentation of Cambodia-Vietnam relations.

The paper posits that China is a significant factor likely to have an influence on Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions and implementation. In the attainment of national interests for absolute independence and self-reliance at the emergence of external and internal security threats, Pol Pot, the most influential Khmer Rouge leader, could not survive without China's strong support. Thus, he needs to form whatever policies that have to be consistent with what China wants otherwise his regime might end up

losing the latter's support. In this aspect, the more strictly he complies with those policies, the more likely his regime heavily depends on China. In sum up, this case precisely divulges the regime failure as a result of the stagnant policy enforcement and prodigious dependence on only one external actor, China, who is reluctant to offer more help when Pol Pot refuses to obey its advice.

**Keywords:** Pol Pot, foreign policy, China's influence, Cambodia-Vietnam conflict, neo-classical realism



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude and utmost thanks to the following momentous institutions and individuals for their respective contribution, tireless effort and support for the successful completion of this study. Without their on-going support and encouragement, this study will not materialize.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Thai International Cooperation Agency (TICA) of the Kingdom of Thailand for granting me this valuable opportunity and crucial scholarship to pursue the Master of Arts in Asia Pacific Studies (MAPS) at Thammasat University. My whole heartfelt thank goes to my supervisor Dr Sueo Sudo, Professor of Political Science at Thammasat University, and thesis committee members for the resolutely enlightening insights, fruitful comments and continuing guidance on my study from the start till the end. My greatest gratefulness also goes to Associate Professor Suphat Suphachalasai, Director of MAPS Program, and to MAPS Academic Support Unit for the excellent academic support and advice.

Secondly, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to Uncle Youk Chhang, Executive Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) for the in-depth interview and fabulous provision of all relevant documents/data on Khmer Rouge filed at his centre, which I deem an excellent place for education and research on Khmer Rouge history. My highest appreciation is extended to Dr In Sophal and Lecturer Nhem Boraden for the interview and worthwhile comments. The next special thank is extended to Dr Path Kosal, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College, University of New York, for his enlightening inputs and useful Khmer Rouge documents.

Finally, I would like to profoundly and faithfully thank my parents and family who always encourage me to study hard and look forward to seeing my completion of this master's degree. They greatly inspire me to strive perpetually for this success.

Mr. UN Samnang

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ABSTRACT   | (1)  |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS  | (3)  |
| LIST OF TABLES   | (7)  |
| LIST OF FIGURES  | (8)  |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS  | (9)  |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION   | 1    |
| 1.1 Research Background  | 2    |
| 1.2 Problem Statement  | 4    |
| 1.3 Research Objectives and Questions                              | 4    |
| 1.4 Significance of the Study                                      | 5    |
| 1.5 Hypothesis   | 6    |
| CHAPTER 2 FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS                                   | 7    |
| 2.1 Literature Review  | 7    |
| 2.1.1 Terms of Analysis  | 8    |
| 2.1.2 Cambodia's Alliances with China and Vietnam                  | 11   |
| 2.1.3 China's Soft Power, aid and Its Influence on the Khmer Rouge | 15   |
| 2.2 Research Methodology   | 23   |
| 2.2.1 Neoclassical Realism as a Framework for Analysis             | 23   |
| 2.2.2 Conceptual Framework   | 25   |

|   |        |
|---|--------|
|   | (5)    |
| 2.2.3 Data Collection Process   | 27     |
| 2.2.4 Scope and Limitation  | 28     |
| <br>CHAPTER 3 CASE STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA ON KHMER ROUGE'S<br>FOREIGN POLICY | <br>29 |
| 3.1 Analysis of the External Environment (Threats and Opportunities)                  | 29     |
| 3.1.1 Pol Pot's Perception on Friends and Foes  | 30     |
| 3.1.2 The U.S and the USSR in the Eyes of Pol Pot                                     | 32     |
| 3.1.3 Vietnam in the Eyes of Pol Pot  | 32     |
| 3.1.4 China in the Eyes of Pol Pot  | 33     |
| 3.1.5 Pol Pot's Perception of External Threats  | 35     |
| 3.1.6 Pol Pot's Perception on External Opportunity                                    | 37     |
| 3.2 Analysis of Pol Pot's Perception in Leading the Country                           | 40     |
| 3.3 Analysis of domestic factors  | 45     |
| 3.3.1 Maintaining leadership and security   | 45     |
| 3.3.2 Perpetual extermination of hidden enemies                                       | 46     |
| 3.4 Cambodia's Foreign Policy under Pol Pot's Leadership                              | 52     |
| 3.4.1 Factors Shaping Foreign Policy  | 53     |
| 3.4.2 Pol Pot's Cambodia Foreign Policy (1975-1979)                                   | 54     |
| 3.4.3 Implication of Pol Pot's Foreign Policy   | 55     |
| 3.4.4 Why China Provided Tremendous aid to Pol Pot                                    | 57     |
| 3.5 Conclusion  | 60     |
| <br>CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF CAMBODIA-VIETNAM WAR                        | <br>62 |
| 4.1 Analysis of the External Environment  | 64     |
| 4.1.1 The International Context   | 64     |
| 4.1.1.1 U.S Policy in Indochina   | 65     |
| 4.1.1.2 USSR Policy in Indochina  | 67     |
| 4.1.2 The Regional Context  | 68     |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
|  | (6) |
| 4.1.2.1 China's Policy in Indochina  | 68  |
| 4.1.2.2 Vietnam's Policy in Indochina  | 71  |
| 4.2 Analysis of Pol Pot's Perception of Cambodia-Vietnam Conflicts                     | 72  |
| 4.2.1 Historical Context and Ethnic Tension  | 73  |
| 4.2.2 Overconfidence and Miscalculation of Vietnamese Strength                         | 74  |
| 4.3 Analysis of Domestic Factors   | 75  |
| 4.4 Examination of the Involvement of Chinese aid in the Cambodia-<br>Vietnam Conflict | 79  |
| 4.5 Conclusion   | 82  |
| CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION   | 85  |
| 5.1 Key Findings from the Two Case Studies   | 85  |
| 5.2 Limitation of This Study and Prospects for Future Study                            | 89  |
| REFERENCES   | 91  |
| APPENDICES   |     |
| APPENDIX A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS   | 100 |
| APPENDIX B DK FOREIGN POLICY   | 101 |
| APPENDIX C USSR-VIETNAM TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND<br>COOPERATION, 1978                  | 102 |
| APPENDIX D SINO-AMERICAN JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ IN SHANGHAI, 1972                            | 106 |
| BIOGRAPHY  | 111 |

## LIST OF TABLES

| Tables   | Page |
|--|------|
| 3.1 Khmer Rouge's immediate eight-point policy after seizing power in 1975     | 47   |
| 3.2 The estimated total number of deaths under Pol Pot's leadership, 1975-1979 | 50   |
| 4.1 Estimated number of Cambodia-Vietnam armed clashes, 1975-1978              | 75   |



## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figures  | Page |
|--|------|
| 2.1 Theoretical framework of neoclassical realism                        | 25   |
| 2.2 Conceptual framework for Khmer Rouge's foreign policy analysis       | 27   |
| 3.1 Leadership structure of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (1976-1978) | 30   |
| 3.2 Diagram of the Communist Party of Kampuchea                          | 31   |
| 3.3 List of Khmer Rouge's alleged enemies                                | 33   |
| 3.4 Khmer Rouge's prison without walls                                   | 49   |
| 3.5 Origin of Prisoners at S-21  | 51   |
| 3.6 Percentages of Prisoners by Zone at S-21                             | 52   |
| 3.7 determinants shaping foreign policy decision                         | 54   |
| 3.8 Implications of DK's foreign policy                                  | 57   |
| 4.1 Causes of Cambodia-Vietnam war                                       | 63   |

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviations | Terms   |
|---------------|---|
| CCP           | Chinese Communist Party                           |
| CGDK          | Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea      |
| Comecon       | Council for Mutual Economic Assistance            |
| COSVN         | Central Office for South Vietnam                  |
| CPK           | Communist Party of Kampuchea known as Khmer Rouge |
| CPV           | Communist Party of Vietnam                        |
| CPSU          | Communist Party of the Soviet Union               |
| DK            | Democratic Kampuchea                              |
| ICP           | Indochinese Communist Party                       |
| KPRP          | Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party           |
| KPNLF         | Khmer People's National Liberation Front          |
| KR            | Khmer Rouge                                       |
| PRC           | People Republic of China                          |
| RAK           | Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea                   |
| The U.S       | The United States                                 |
| The USSR      | The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic            |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Two famous quotes reflect the influence of China on the Khmer Rouge regime. First, scholar Sophal Ear, an expert in diplomacy and world affairs, observes that ‘If your hand is in another man’s pocket, you must walk where he walks’ (Ear, 2018). Its apparent literal meaning is that one cannot do whatever one wishes, but must instead follow the direction of those providing them assistance. Second, Andrew Matha, director of the China and Asia-Pacific Studies program at Cornell University and author of ‘Brothers in Arms: China’s Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979,’ notes that at least 90% of foreign aid granted to the Khmer Rouge was from China. He points out that “Without China’s assistance, the Khmer Rouge regime would not have lasted a week” (Levin, 2015). These two quotes explicitly emphasize the huge dependency of the Khmer Rouge on China during its leadership.

In this sense, the study aims at exploring the influence of China on the Khmer Rouge’s foreign policy formation and implementation by thoroughly examining personal characteristics and perception of its leader towards China, a subject that has never been examined before. Even though patron-client relations and bandwagoning tendencies might help explain some elements of the Khmer Rouge’s alliance-building behaviours towards China, they are still insufficient to explain the unique characteristics of the Khmer Rouge leadership and its foreign policy formation and implementation. Based on lack of adequate explanation, the study examines how the Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot in particular, perceived China and to what extent this perception impacted its foreign policy and relations, especially with China and Vietnam. To this end, the study will present two case studies in order to find out the influence of China on the Khmer Rouge and the reasons behind the hostile relations between Cambodia and Vietnam from 1975 to 1979.

The study uses the term ‘heavy reliance’ to refer to the Khmer Rouge leader’s dependence on China. The term literally means that the former was unable to survive alone without help from the later. The help covers not only the continued economic development assistance but also military supply, political, ideological and technical assistance. Further, it also reflects the situation in which the Khmer Rouge

leader depends only on China for security and political protection from external threats seemingly imposed by the international environment. Based on these key elements, the study uses the ‘heavy reliance’ term to elaborate the high degree of dependency of Cambodia on China during the Khmer Rouge era.

The following study contains five chapters covering four key elements: an introduction, an outline of the theoretical framework, two case studies and a conclusion. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the research background and key issues to be studied. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and sets the framework for research methodology. Chapters 3 and 4 provide detailed case studies of the most important themes. Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the overall findings and seeks to validate the initial hypothesis as well as identifying the limitations of the study and the prospects for future research.

## 1.1 Research Background

Cambodia, after obtaining independence from France in 1953, went through several changes of regimes and government collapses because of internal and external conflicts as well as domestic power competition among different political factions. This led to massive changes in Cambodia’s internal political order and foreign relations under the different regimes until the end of civil war in 1998 (Path et al., 2017, pp. 7–8).

Starting from independence to 1979, Cambodia underwent three regime changes<sup>1</sup> and suffered relentlessly from civil war, particularly during the Democratic Kampuchea, or so-called Khmer Rouge or Pol Pot regime from 1975 to 1979, in which around 20% of the population was massacred (Kiernan, 2010; Port, 2015, p. 588). One

---

<sup>1</sup>The three official names Cambodia went through from 1953 to 1979 are as follows: the Kingdom of Cambodia (1953 to 1970) under the reign of King Norodom Sihanouk, the Khmer Republic (1970 to 1975) led by the U.S.- backed government Marshal Lon Nol who overthrew King Sihanouk by military coup, and Democratic Kampuchea (DK) (1975-1979) led by Khmer Rouge who came to power by ousting the Lon Nol government by revolutionary force.

of the most noticeable reasons behind these regime changes is Cambodia's political vision and policy in pursuing national interests under the influence of unstable regional and global politics, especially ideological influences in South East Asia and Indochina (Path et al., 2017, pp. 8, 13, 17).

As a small state, the kingdom's post-independence foreign policies often oscillate between non-alignment and sturdy alliance due to her ineffective economic system, political insecurity and foreign powers (Path et., 2017). In this regard, Cambodia is seen depending on foreign assistance to cope with turbulent circumstances and secure survival. Likewise, some donor countries might utilize this help as a means to extract benefits from and inject influence over recipient countries (Roberts, Hite, & Chorev, 2014, p. 403). A recent study has revealed that Cambodia is one of the sixteen most vulnerable countries to China's 'debt-book diplomacy' through which the latter can attain strategic interests or diplomatic dominance (Parker & Chefitz, 2018; Westcott, 2018). The aid helps the country survive during the tumultuous times (Path et al., 2017, pp. 229–230). Nonetheless, it might not prevent the country from the engagement of regional power competition, civil wars and even regime failure.

Given the connection between the provision of foreign aid and aid influence over recipient country, this study will examine the influence of China's foreign aid to Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge era from 1975 to 1979. More specifically, the study intends to explore the extent that China's foreign aid impacted Cambodia's foreign policy formation and implementation and whether or not the aid provoked Cambodia into a war against Vietnam.

A thorough study of the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 is probably the best window on how the country has been influenced by external factors, especially foreign aid. During this regime, Cambodia fell into the domestic civil war, engaged in power competition in Indochina and it moved back to year zero<sup>2</sup>. In this period, then Chinese President Mao Tse-Tung pledged to offer Khmer Rouge '\$1

---

<sup>2</sup>Year Zero refers a period when Cambodia purely relied on peasant economy without social class divisions, money, books, schools, religions and even hospitals, according to the UK-based Cambodian Communities out of Crisis (CCC) (CCC, 1994).

billion in military and economic aid', the biggest aid in Chinese history (Ciorciari, 2014b, pp. 217, 221). Apart from economic aid, tremendous Chinese advisers and technicians were also dispatched to assist the Khmer Rouge leadership (Gough, 1986, pp. 22; 41).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

China, through its massive foreign aid, is one of the irresistible core elements which supported the Khmer Rouge's leadership, military force and survival. It is also apparently a catalyst which inspired the regime to move forward with the implementation of its foreign policy objectives of self-independence, territory protection and non-interference in domestic affairs (Ciorciari, 2014b, pp. 218; 223–224). To this end, the Khmer Rouge eliminated factors threatening its internal leadership though it had to endure tough consequences: a war against Vietnam, genocide, population starvation and even regime collapse (Hill & Menon, 2014, p. 1650). Within this context, the specific issue to be addressed is whether or not China influenced the Khmer Rouge's foreign policy decision and implementation. In short, did China's aid help Khmer Rouge survive during wartime?

## 1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The ultimate purposes of this study are the following:

- To explore the influence of China on Cambodia's foreign policy during the Khmer Rouge epoch;
- To describe the reasons behind the Khmer Rouge's foreign policy decisions and international relations, especially its decisions to rely on China and to break off the relationship with Vietnam

To achieve these objectives, the study has determined two key research questions along with five sub-research questions in order to conduct research on both primary and secondary sources: (1) To what extent did China influence Khmer Rouge foreign policy and relations? and (2) To what extent did its foreign aid contribute to the Cambodia-Vietnam war?



The following are the sub-questions: (1) What were the factors shaping the development of friendship between Cambodia and China during the Khmer Rouge regime? (2) What were the major issues making Khmer Rouge receptive to Chinese foreign aid? (3) Why did China provide foreign aid and technical assistance to Cambodia, and how significant was the aid to Pol Pot? (4) Why did Cambodia's Khmer Rouge leaders break up the relationship with communist Vietnam after gaining power but built a closer relationship with China? and finally, (5) what were the causes of Cambodia-Vietnam armed conflict?

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Given the controversial debate on the influence of China over the Khmer Rouge era and limited elaboration on its foreign policy, the study will provide additional insightful inputs on the above issues through its discussion of primary and secondary sources. The findings will shed extra light on this highly significant period in history for Cambodian people, academic students, research scholars and foreign policy observers to validate the influence of China on Khmer Rouge's foreign policy implementation and the factors leading to the provocation of war against Vietnam.

A more thorough examination on Cambodia-Sino relations and the influence of China on the foreign policy of the Khmer Rouge era will be instructive for Cambodia and other weaker states wishing to make alliances with formidable states like China. In the context of growing uncertainty of regional security instigated by the U.S. policy of 'American First,' the rising of China, as well as apparent economic sanctions to be imposed by the European Union (EU) over the recent challenges to democracy following the dissolution of a major opposition party in late 2017, Cambodia, now, has no better choice other than moving closer again to China as its key ally for economic growth, national prosperity and peaceful development. Therefore, the study will be served as a source for the public, scholars, researchers and decision-makers, and Cambodian policymakers, in particular, to be well informed and make mindful foreign policy decisions so as to avoid repeating the same mistakes

and facing the same repercussions from which Cambodia suffered during the Khmer Rouge regime.

### 1.5 Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that the Khmer Rouge had no better option except depending on China to countervail dire threats from the Vietnamese ambition to take control of the whole of Indochina. In this aspect, China is a significant factor likely to have an influence on Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions and implementation. In the attainment of national interests for absolute independence and self-reliance at the emergence of external and internal security threats, Pol Pot was seemingly forced to form whatever policies that were consistent with China expectations, otherwise, his regime might end up losing the latter's support. In this respect, the more strictly he complies with those policies, the more his regime would heavily depend on China. This case explicitly proves the regime failure as a result of the stagnant policy enforcement and prodigious dependence on only one external actor, China, which was reluctant to offer more help when its advice had fallen on the deaf ears of Pol Pot.

## CHAPTER 2

### FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

This chapter has two main objectives: identifying any gaps in the existing literature and then setting up a study framework in order to shed additional light on the literature. It comprises two parts: a literature review and research methodology. The literature review section will first explore alliance building behaviour generally, before moving on to deal with Cambodia's alliances with China and Vietnam, as well as China's soft power, foreign aid and influence on Khmer Rouge. The research methodology section will elaborate the steps in the research process. It describes the research design, theoretical and conceptual framework, data collection process as well as the scope and limitation of the study.

#### 2.1 Literature Review

An enormous body of literature and academic studies/research have examined the Cambodian genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime, but studies on influence of Chinese aid on the Cambodia-Sino relationship and Khmer Rouge' foreign policy are quite limited, especially discussion of Chinese aid on Khmer Rouge's foreign policy implementation at the sphere of international relations and its leaders' personality and perception. In addition, the current findings on the influence of China on the Khmer Rouge are also controversial and still debatable given widely different kinds of data and evidence collected by various researchers and scholars. Thus, this study will attempt to clarify some of the previous research on Chinese influence on Khmer Rouge's foreign policy decision and implementation as well as the extent to which China's foreign aid contributes to Cambodia-Vietnam hostility.

The literature review helps define, discuss and synthesise existing literature which leads to an identification of the knowledge gap in which the study will fulfil. It proceeds with the following steps.

### 2.1.1 Terms of Analysis

The key terms of the alliance to be studied in the literature are the following: balancing, hedging, bandwagoning and patron-client relations. It is essential to find out reasons pushing states to ally with one another before further exploring the outcomes and implications influencing each state at the global, regional and national levels. In international relations, many scholars have debated various forms of alliance behaviour between stronger and weaker states, trying to figure out the reasons behind their respective alliance performances.

Alliances can take on various forms based on the perception of the individual state towards other states, the emergence of critical threats imposed by a potential adversary and different periods. Those forms include balancing, hedging, bandwagoning and patron-client relations. The study will define and thoroughly analyse each based on the existing literature.

The first pattern is balancing. It is a strategy that states apply to maintain the balance of power between different alliances. It aims at maximising survival and promoting stability since equality of power poses difficulty for victory by any side (Wagner, 1994). Furthermore, in the 'balance of threat' theory, Stephen Walt depicts four factors ignited by a great power that influence weaker states' policy decisions on alliance manoeuvres, 'aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions' (Chen & Yang, 2013, p. 273; Walt, 1987). Thus, to contain the perceived threat from an antagonist state, a country must seemingly make a balance against it either internally or externally. For internal means, a government might allocate resources to enhance defensive capability, whereas, for the external approach, a regime might seek cooperation with other states that are confronted with a similar threat.

Balancing might encompass two different levels of intensity: high-intensity and low-intensity or soft balancing. High-intensity balancing poses a 'more openly adversarial' relationship between the balancing and the targeted states since their cooperation is marred by political tautness, while low-intensity sees a 'constructive relationship' between the concerned countries (Roy, 2005, p. 306). It has been commonly assumed that states in modern times, especially in the post-Cold War

period, tend to apply a 'soft balancing strategy' to deal with perceived threats. This softened approach encompasses the establishment of narrow diplomatic coalitions and the enhancement of existing alliances (Chen & Yang, 2013).

The second term is bandwagoning, which is defined differently by various scholars. Scholars of international relations generally give two distinct definitions. In the first, bandwagoning refers to an alignment with a threatening state or government to avoid a future or further attack by it (Walt 1987, p. 17). The second one refers to the strategy of taking part in the winning side in order to reap the economic benefits (Schweller 1994, pp. 72–107; Chen & Yang, 2013; Roy, 2005, p. 306). Based on these two definitions, it is clear that some ASEAN member states are adopting a bandwagoning strategy toward China. Their reasoning is not that China is perceived as a potential adversary but a crucial regional political player and the potential economic powerhouse of Asia from which they might reap economic opportunities and enhance cooperation in the future. However, the second definition overlooks the importance of security concerns and political motives behind the alignment (Roy, 2005, p.308). Thus, it might not well reflect the situation during the Cold War period when weaker states were influenced by competition among the great powers and under security threats from external factors.

Discussion of political and security issues offers a route for further analysis of the reasons behind the state's bandwagoning behaviour. Taking threats into serious account, fragile states are likely to seek alliance through bandwagoning with powerful states that are less dangerous for three compelling reasons: survival, economic and military resources. In this regard, Stephen Walt argues that states opt for the alliance when they perceive another state or coalition as being a serious threat, and their alliance behaviour is to seek an alliance with another stronger state that is far relatively less perilous (Walt, 1987). This idea means weaker states do not form alliances with their most lethal adversary. Instead, they might seek an alliance with the second most threatening state to balance against the former and secure their survival.

Steven David also emphasises that weaker states in the Third World 'often bandwagon with superpowers to balance more dangerous domestic or foreign

threats'. Further, Jack Levy and Michael Barnett argue that leaders in the Third World make alliances to obtain urgent economic and military resources in order to cope with outside and inside security threats as well as to strengthen their respective political power (Schweller, 1994, p.77). Further, Schweller contends that the state's intention in bandwagoning is to seek some proportion of spoils from a dominant ally's triumph and prospects for enhanced bargaining power in the future (1994, pp80; 96).

However, there is also a consequence of bandwagoning for the weaker states. Walt stresses that there is an 'unequal exchange' in the bandwagoning relations in which feeble states make huge concessions to a prevailing ally and are willing to accept or endure the latter's subsequent illegitimate actions. Even though weaker states may not pay an enormously high cost for it, they are likely vulnerable to fallout out from their dominant ally's decision; want it or not, they need to appease it (Schweller, 1994, p. 80).

The third alliance pattern is hedging. Denny Roy defines it as a policy that states adopt to build up a good relationship with all great powers and opt to avoid antagonising any of them as long as these great powers pose no direct threat to their vital interests. States apply this strategy not only to cope with risk and uncertainty but also to maintain their long-term interests by keeping multiple counteracting options with all key powers (Roy, 2005; Chen & Yang, 2013).

The last term is a Patron-Client relation, which is viewed as a strategy that weaker states adopt to seek security protection and economic assistance from a dominant partner. According to Ciorciari, who has examined ideas about the function of patron-client relationships from a range of scholars, including Scott (1972), Shoemaker and Spanier (1984), Carney (1989), Kang, (2010), Walt (1987), Schweller (1994) and Keohane (1986) among others, the formation of this relationship is based on 'a voluntary and asymmetric exchange of benefits'. In the patron-client orbit, a patron provides aid and military protection, whereas a client, usually referred to a feeble state, feels obligated to repay by supporting the former's 'diplomatic agenda, economic interests and project of military force' at its own cost despite no apparent compulsion.

Further, the operation of this system varies widely due to three compelling principles: the nature of the patron's capability, its strategic environment, and norms being implemented. What makes fragile states seek patronage from the great powers or even a rising power are as follows: fear of insecurity (threat), desire for economic assistance, or regime protection, as well as a share of territorial, monetary or political gains which result. Nonetheless, the reverse impact resulting from this relationship on client state might include deterioration of its domestic legitimacy, autonomy, alienation of neighbours and risk of relinquishment (Ciorciari, 2014a, pp.3-6).

These key terms, defined above, are crucial to this study in explaining the tendency of a state's behaviour in seeking an alliance with another and the prediction of the implications of this attempt. Generally, the overwhelming implication is that all states are likely to fall into one or more of these categories regardless of regime, politics, relative material power and foreign policy. However, these concepts do not account for the impact of the personal perception and characteristics of state leaders in forming cooperation with other states in the international system, nor have do they compare the different behaviours of states under different leadership styles and contexts. Thus, these terms overlook the role and perception of leaders in shaping their respective state's behaviour.

To further investigate the limitations and implications of these alliance patterns, the study will demonstrate the case of Cambodia, which is generally perceived as a weak and small state, as analysed by Thearith Leng (2017), in its relationships with China and Vietnam. In this regard, it will review what the current state of international relations scholarship on Cambodia's behaviour towards these countries in the following section.

### **2.1.2 Cambodia's Alliances with China and Vietnam**

The behaviour of small states in countervailing external security threats from greater powers remains an unfinished debate among international relations scholars and theorists. Generally, scholars share the view that small states might opt for either bandwagoning or patron-client relations with most threatening powers in order to secure their own survival or counter what they deem as the second

most threatening power. Nonetheless, other scholars also posit that small states also apply 'hedging' policies to balance against the threatening power, but the term of hedging has been defined differently according to actual context and circumstance (Leng, 2017). To explore a concrete example of the alliance behaviour of small states, the study will investigate the case of Cambodia towards China and Vietnam.

As China is on the rise, many relatively small states are using various approaches to get along or otherwise contain it. The prospect for alliance or balancing is seemingly based on two compelling reasons: degree of threat and economic interests. In this regard, Chen and Yang (2013) argue that smaller states in Southeast Asia prefer three options: adopting a policy of either soft-balancing, bandwagoning or hedging towards China.

According to the research, states facing a low degree of threat and having positive economic prospects with China are likely to apply a bandwagoning strategy with it. Those experiencing a high degree of threat and negative economic impact will use a soft-balancing. States with the prospect of a high threat but positive economic impact or low threat but negative impact prefer the hedging option in the wake of China's ascendance. It is further claimed that Southeast Asian states prefer the balancing option when they perceive China as a mounting threat, applying the bandwagoning strategy if the latter is considered as more favourable and ultimately choose a hedging option if China is somewhere between the previous two options. For Cambodia, Chen and Yang contend that Cambodia has applied a policy of bandwagoning towards China to obtain military protection, greater economic cooperation and political backing (2013, pp. 265, 280).

However, Ciorciari characterises Cambodia-Sino relation as a Patron-Client relation under the Chinese model. He argues that 'both strategic and normative factors militate against China's cultivation of strongly devoted client states and instead favour a more limited model of patron-client tie' (2014a, p.2). He gives two reasons: (1) China's cautiousness in pushing for the full enforcement of 'subordinate patron-client pact' based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence and (2) conventional disinclination of feeble states to fully comply with the said pact in the absence of any calamitous security threat (Ciorciari, 2014a, pp. 2, 23). In this regard, China tolerantly



collects friends through offering 'substantial benefits' to them without demanding a costly return. Therefore, its asymmetric friends have more options than acting like a client (p.6).

In such kind of relationship, Ciorciari postulates that both Cambodia and China after 1997 have an 'asymmetric partnership based on shared interests and a basic quid pro quo'. For instance, the latter provides economic assistance, political backing and limited military support to the former. Cambodia, in return, offers China access to natural resources, economic opportunities and political support on specific issues regarding China's key concerns. However, he does not regard this return as a costly repayment despite severe international criticism over Cambodia's action in favour of China's interests (pp.11-13).

The study notes that Ciorciari's analysis of the Cambodia-Sino patron-client relationship might well reflect only the current situation, particularly since 1998 when Cambodia already ended its nearly three-decade civil war and was in need of development assistance to rehabilitate the war-torn country instead of requiring military protection. In this regard, his claim might not adequately explain the situation from 1975 to 1979 when the Khmer Rouge regime encountered perpetuated threat of foreign incursion, domestic turmoil, economic hardship and fixed policy implementation. Under such tough circumstance, the Khmer Rouge needed more protection and military assistance from China greater than development assistance.

Furthermore, Ciorciari's argument fails to discuss the implications of the Cambodia-Sino Patron-Client relation, which was hugely influenced by its aid to Cambodia during turbulent time or chaos especially when Cambodia had war with Vietnam. Concerning the study of Khmer Rouge, there seem to be no scholars applying the analysis of leader's perception and domestic factors into explaining Khmer Rouge's international relations, security and the consequences. Therefore, this study will help fill in the knowledge gap by intensively analysing the Khmer Rouge leader's perception of China and Vietnam and its consequences.

In the case of Cambodia's relationship with Vietnam, Thearith Leng argues that Cambodia in contemporary politics has been applying a hedging strategy towards the latter to maintain a peaceful bilateral relationship and get it engaged in

the peaceful conflict-settlement process. He emphasises that Cambodia's current hedging strategy toward Vietnam follows its unique characteristics of 'economic pragmatism, limited bandwagoning, binding engagement and soft-balancing'. He further postulates that non-state actors also share a role in shaping Cambodia's foreign policy direction (Leng, 2017, p. 1).

More significantly, according to Leng (2017), Cambodia in the past applied both balancing and bandwagoning in its foreign policy strategies in relations with Vietnam. Nevertheless, these strategies could not help Cambodia escape from Vietnam's threat. Instead, they caused Cambodia extensive losses in terms of territorial sovereignty, weakened domestic security, external occupation and subversion. For instance, Cambodia under the rule of King Sihanouk in the 1950s and 1960s decided to align with China to countervail South Vietnam, but this balancing ended up with border incursions and a coup against the king. From early 1970 to 1975, Cambodia, under the leadership of Marshal Lon Nol, applied a balancing strategy against Vietnam. This action met the same fate and ended with domestic intervention by the Vietnamese communist which supported the Khmer Rouge to overthrow the regime in 1975. Later, the Khmer Rouge itself also tried to escape Vietnamese influence one more time by siding with China. This also resulted in the regime collapse in 1979 in the face of the Vietnam-backed Cambodian Liberation Front (pp. 6–7).

This study notes several failures in accounting for Cambodia's attempts to escape Vietnamese orbit by applying the balancing strategy to countervail the latter. Leng's argument forms the fundamental core of understanding Cambodia's alliance behaviour towards Vietnam from the past to the present. Nonetheless, he does not mention reasons to support his claim, underscoring that Cambodia's past balancing strategy against Vietnam is unlikely relevant to security (Leng, 2017, p. 7). Further, he does not provide in-depth analysis and thorough discussion on the balancing strategy he speculates the Khmer Rouge applied to contain Vietnam and the motives for doing so, let alone providing a detailed description of the split in the Cambodia-Vietnam relationship during the Khmer Rouge period. There is also a lack of analysis of leadership perceptions in shaping foreign policy.

Thus Leng's argument merely covers the present relationship between Cambodia and Vietnam given current evidence and information. Thus, there is a knowledge gap in the reasons for Cambodia's bandwagoning with China to contain Vietnam through the balancing strategy during the Khmer Rouge period. The impact of the Cambodia-Sino alliance on the Cambodia-Vietnam relationship is also under-researched.

To sum up, the study views that to date the discussion of state alliance behaviour patterns is not yet sufficient to predict a state's future actions towards other states since there are other significant factors influencing the behaviour. Among them are the leader's perception and a wide range of domestic factors, which are crucial elements in directing the state's foreign policy, interaction with other states and the international environment.

### **2.1.3 China's Soft Power, aid and Its Influence on the Khmer Rouge**

This section discusses how China uses its foreign aid to enhance cooperation with recipient states, especially those in the third world, and how the aid influences those recipient states. Through aid, China also wishes to enhance its soft power in those states, too. Therefore, the study will thoroughly examine the characteristics of China's soft power, its foreign aid and the aid influence on Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge.

Defining China's soft power is an on-going deliberation among scholars, researchers, policymakers, analysts and academia worldwide as China continues to ascend dramatically in the international arena. The term soft power, as initially defined, by Joseph Nye is "the means of exporting value and norms to shape other's preference in order to get them to want what you want". However, this conceptualisation seems not to reflect the Chinese perception of soft power. Instead, China prefers its term as 'ability to win the hearts of the people and the world' (Lu & Lai, 2012, pp. 138–139).

Lu and Lai (2012) have identified four tools China employs to boost its soft power and to build a global image: 1) reassuring political discourse, 2) diplomatic conduct, 3) cultural and public diplomacy and 4) trade and assistance (p.2). Both authors highlight the general recognition by many scholars that China uses its

foreign aid as a strategic means to reap power politics objectives (p.138). However, the method by which China has pursued its politics and national interests has evolved over time due to the different perceptions of its leaders toward the term 'national identity'. Both authors argue that national identity has a key role in determining national interests and the agendas behind foreign policy options, with two variables shaping it: historical context and domestic affairs. Nonetheless, China's national identity has been at the core of scholarly questioning by those who are sceptical about China's position and role in this swiftly evolving world (Hyer, 2011, p. 7).

Both authors contend that from 1949 to 1978, Chinese leaders utilised foreign aid to spread proletarian revolution outside the country, to foster international communist struggle, to fight against isolation and to build buffer zones along its borders (p.142). Nevertheless, the aid was used as a tool of soft power inconsistently depending on the different Chinese leadership (p.156). Sheng Ding, the author of the *Dragon's Hidden Wing*, as mentioned by Hyer, raises that China's soft power is deeply rooted in its 'philosophy and culture throughout history.' In this regard, he contends that to enhance its soft power, China needs to invigorate its traditional culture and incorporate it into its present foreign policy (Hyer, 2011, p. 8).

Hyer also points out that another aspect of China's soft power is a political value embedded into its domestic institutions, policies and governance. It tries to create a 'Beijing consensus' that supports authoritarian politics while at the same time opposing the 'Washington consensus'. With this characteristic, expansion of China's soft power is limited as it opposes the worldwide recognised norms of economic liberalism and political democracy (2011, p. 10).

Generally, foreign aid or foreign assistance (the two terms can be used interchangeably) has been defined as the flows of finance, technical assistance and commodities from donor to recipient countries according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It is in the form of a grant or subsidised loan that helps to enhance economic growth and improve the welfare of recipient countries. Nevertheless, it does not cover military spending and non-development assistance (Roberts et al., 2014, p. 399). Later, the OECD has amended

its wording to cover the spending on military and security services in fragile states so long as the aid still supports development objectives (Mason, 2016).

Following its establishment in the 1950s, the People's Republic of China started providing aid to other less developed or developing countries even though China itself faced limited funds and materials. As mentioned in its white paper, China provided foreign aid for three main purposes: fulfilment of its international obligations, assistance in the development capacity of recipient countries, and enhancement of people's livelihood and promotion of economic growth and social progress. Also, China also extended its granting of foreign aid to other developing countries outside socialist countries in Asia and Africa following the improvement of its foreign relations with them (China White Paper on Foreign Aid, 2011).

Providing foreign aid enables China to achieve three objectives: reaping friendly relations and friendly economic cooperation with developing countries, enhancing South-South cooperation, and contributing to development. To this end, China characterises its aid based on the following features: non-political conditions being imposed on recipient countries, compliance with equality and mutual benefits and emphasis on substantial results (China White Paper on Foreign Aid, 2011, pp. 1–3).

Nevertheless, many scholars share a similar view that China has utilised its aid as a tool to project its power and influence into recipient countries. To spread its influence, China tends to establish a patron-client relation, in which China may supply financial incentives and provide protection to seek diplomatic support (Ciorciari, 2014a; Kurlantzick, 2007). Similarly, Ngeow (2015, p. 139) argues that China is striving to construct a group of client states whose foreign policies can be influenced by China for its interests. Also, Alain-Gerard Marsot<sup>3</sup> (1969), perceives China's foreign aid as an approach to project its influence over recipient countries. In the case of Cambodia, he asserts that 'Cambodia can be used by China as a spokesman on the international level'. Hutt (2016) also contends that China's foreign aid is used to replace the Soviet Union in less developed countries, particularly in Asia.

---

<sup>3</sup> He is the author of China's Aid to Cambodia published in 1969.

Moreover, Sophal Ear, the author of *Aid Dependence in Cambodia*, contends that foreign aid has transformed Cambodia into ‘a kleptocracy cum thugocracy’, in which political elites can collude for personal gain and set up a patronage-based politics (Ear, 2012; Kheang, 2013, p. 284). Although this study might have contemporary relevance, it does not examine the consequences of China’s foreign aid granted to the Khmer Rouge regime and the consequences of the aid influence on its foreign relations.

China’s foreign aid is also perceived as a tool to ensure the attainment of natural resources and positive relationships with recipient countries. China is trying to build social, political and economic ties with many leaders around the world to gain the privilege of accessing to natural resources in those countries (Pheakdey, 2012). To this end, China is seen using a variety of means such as non-string-attached aid, charm offensives and debt cancellation. Many scholars, namely Lengauer (2011), Lum et al. (2011), Weston, Combell and Koleski (2011), share the same view that China's foreign aid is aimed at securing natural resources, perpetuating strategic diplomacy, projecting Chinese value and expanding its export markets. They are of the view that sooner or later China will overtake the US as a global superpower; that is why it needs to obtain extensive international support to secure its impending rise as a next superpower in a peaceful manner (Pheakdey, 2012, pp. 71-72).

Aid is also seemingly viewed as a tool to ‘win the hearts’ of Cambodian politicians. In this area, Pheakdey<sup>4</sup>, author of *Cambodia-China Relations: A Positive-Sum Game?*, argues that even though there is no apparent string attached to Chinese foreign aid, in fact, there are many strings attached. However, those hidden strings are different from those made by Western donors who push for the promotion of democracy, good governance, and protection of human rights. Instead of interfering in receiving countries’ internal affairs, China seeks to reap political and investment incentives from politicians who are the decision makers (Pheakdey, 2012, pp. 64–65).

---

<sup>4</sup> His study focuses on analysing Cambodia-Sino relationship and whether or not it leads to the positive-sum game and what is China's critical interests in Cambodia. His study method includes the interview with selected key experts, media analysis and thorough review of the existing literature.

However, the limitation of his study for the purpose of this research is that it lacks comprehensive analysis of Cambodia-Sino bilateral relations during the Khmer Rouge period, let alone the impact of Chinese aid to its regime.

The issue of Chinese influence on the Khmer Rouge remains unsettled among scholars, academic researchers and even Cambodian people and politicians, although the regime vanished almost 40 years ago. Some scholars assert that China is likely the main factor influencing the Khmer Rouge and should be partially responsible for the disasters brought by the leadership. Others overwhelmingly rebuff the claim, denying any considerable influence of China over Khmer Rouge politics. The section below analyses findings from the existing literature supporting these two different points of view.

- **Arguments for China exerting significant influence on the Khmer Rouge**

In the discussion of Chinese influence on the Khmer Rouge, some scholars generally agreed that China did influence it because of the presence of substantial economic aid, military supply, advisers, technicians and adoption of Chinese leadership by the Khmer Rouge. For example, Gough<sup>5</sup>, who studied the origins of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in 1986, contends that Pol Pot's system was a 'form of the Asiatic Mode of Production' following the pattern of the Khmer empire between the 9th to 15th century. However, Pol Pot's leadership was influenced by Maoist ideas and practices given that thousands of Chinese advisers and technicians were attached to the regime (1986, p. 16). He stresses that the allegation made by both Cambodians and Vietnamese accusing the regime of implementing an extreme form of Maoism and being China's puppet seems undeniable given the excessive number of Chinese advisers and technical assistance as well as the influence of Maoism on its leadership. In this regard, he concludes that all disasters during DK were partially a result of the Chinese government's utopian dreams of controlling Indochina (p.22; 41).

---

<sup>5</sup> His study methods was a field visit and interview with leaders and peoples of Cambodia and Vietnam in 1982.



Moreover, in the aftermath of the demise of the Khmer Rouge, there a tribunal investigated Khmer Rouge leaders in 1979. It accused China of backing the Khmer Rouge in carrying out a ferocious genocidal policy against the Cambodian people. The judgment claimed that ‘China massively increased their military aid and set up a thick network of advisors to supervise all the activities of the DK leadership which committed genocide and war against Vietnam’ (Ciorciari, 2014b, p216). It is worth noting Ciorciari's claim, which postulates that the primary purpose of the said tribunal was to make China accountable for its involvement in the Khmer Rouge era, and was probably an opportunity for Vietnam to discredit China and exert influence over Cambodia. The study is of the view that this allegation should have been thoroughly investigated, but not by the Vietnam-backed Cambodian government since the findings might be in favour of Vietnam. Instead, this should have been done independently and professionally. Unfortunately, there has been no such fact-finding mission to probe the issue.

- **Arguments against China exerting significant influence on the Khmer Rouge**

Recent studies have argued that China is unlikely to have exerted massive influence over the Khmer Rouge leadership despite its tremendous support in aid and technical assistance. Ciorciari (2014)<sup>6</sup> sheds light on the DK-Sino relationship by exploring the implicit alliance of the two states and influence of China on the DK regime. His study concludes that the influence of China on the Khmer Rouge was frail. China, despite its aid and technical assistance, could not exert enormous influence on the Khmer Rouge regime over high-level policies, particularly those of security and internal affairs (p.215-118). Similarly, Andrew Mertha<sup>7</sup> (2014) has also found that China

---

<sup>6</sup> His study method includes field interviews with former cadres of Khmer Rouges working with Chinese officials, uncited official DK records and testimony at the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

<sup>7</sup> This study covers the bilateral relationship between Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and China with a core focus on Chinese influence on the Khmer Rouge. In his study, he analyses both countries' network functions and organisation through primary



was 'largely unable to influence Cambodia policy decisions' despite its massive support in foreign aid and technical assistance (Mertha, 2014; Ngeow, 2015, pp. 139–141).

This study contends that these two authors provide a fundamental background to general aspects of the relationship between Cambodia and China with a critical focus on the asymmetric bureaucratic institutions between the two nations. Nevertheless, they do not have an in-depth analysis of the individual characteristics of the Khmer Rouge leadership towards China, most especially Pol Pot. The studies overlook the Khmer Rouge leader's perception of the Chinese role in securing the Khmer Rouge regime and its spreading influence into Indochina. Also, both Ciorciari and Mertha do not mention that there was no Chinese influence on Khmer Rouge's foreign policy. In this regard, this study is of the view that in the orbit of patron-client relation, the Khmer Rouge itself might feel obligated to take foreign policy decisions in favour of its patron despite there being no direct coercion. If Khmer Rouge leaders believed that maintaining the patron-client relationship would significant, they would feel pressure to deliver. Thus, the study will pay more focus on the external environment, domestic issues and the leader's perception in particular because nobody has so far analysed this case from the individual perspective.

In conclusion, the literature consulted demonstrates that Chinese aid outwardly shares a significant role in the survival of Cambodia throughout its contemporary history. Meanwhile, too much dependence on Chinese aid is likely to push Cambodia into the patron-client relation in which Cambodia is willing to do something to please its patron's needs in order to get support, especially during Khmer Rouge's wars when its leaders were in great need of Chinese protection and assistance. However, no scholars have intensively discussed and discovered what support the Khmer Rouge did to get support from China and how the latter's support helped the Khmer Rouge contain Vietnam.

---

data (evidence) and interviews with DK officials and Chinese skilled workers and technicians dispatched to exercise Chinese foreign aid and technical assistance in DK (1975-1979).

Moreover, the Chinese influence on Khmer Rouge's leadership is still an unfinished discussion. The findings of the said literature are also contentious. Some assert that China is likely to have been the main actor wielding considerable influence over the Khmer Rouge and should be partially responsible for the resulting genocide and destruction of the country, whereas others resist, denying any huge influence by China over the Khmer Rouge leadership. This existing literature tends to capture general and broader aspects of Cambodia-Sino relationship by centring much on differences in bureaucratic institutions and failing to provide a thorough analysis of the characters of Khmer Rouge leaders towards China, and their perception of the international system and regional issues in Indochina context. Further, there is no detailed discussion as to what extent China's foreign aid impacted individual Khmer Rouge leaders under the Chinese model of patron-client relations with Cambodia.

After evaluating the existing literature, the study has discovered a lack of investigation of leadership perception and the analysis of domestic factors in explaining state behaviour, let alone foreign policy decision and outcomes. In light of these gaps, the study intends to explore China's influence on Cambodia's foreign policy decision and implementation during the Khmer Rouge era taking into serious consideration the external environment, leader perceptions and domestic factors. Therefore, this study will help fill in the gap in the literature by intensively analysing Khmer Rouge leadership behaviour and perceptions of China and Vietnam and its consequences.

To this end, the study will explore the unique roles and psychological factors of the Khmer Rouge leader in shaping foreign policy decisions in addition to the examination of the international system. The study will make use of neoclassical realism theory to explain and analyse the determinants affecting foreign policy options and the outcomes. This theory is a combination of classical realism and neoclassical realism with more focus on three critical aspects: the external environment, leader's perception and domestic factors of individual state in shaping the direction of foreign policy. The following research methodology section will elaborate on the reasons for choosing this theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. The study will apply this theory to the following two case studies.

## **2.2 Research Methodology**

This section provides an overall framework of the research process, comprising five elements such as research design, theoretical and conceptual framework, data collection process, scope and limitation. To this end, the study will follow a qualitative research method to cover the principal and sub-research questions. In this regard, the retrospective and exploratory research design will be employed to explore the causes and effects of the main events occurring during the Khmer Rouge regime.

Meanwhile, the influence of China and the extent its aid contributed to Cambodia-Vietnam hostility will be examined through examination of three key aspects (external environment, leader's perception and domestic factors) based on the theory of neo-classical realism. This theory will help the study to identify significant factors inspiring Cambodia to heavily depend on China and to find out how this immense reliance affects its foreign policy decision and implementation. To this end, the study will apply mixed research methods, including content and historical analysis, archive research, retrospect perspectives and interview with four Cambodian specialists who are the lecturer, researcher and author of Khmer Rouge history.

### **2.2.1 Neoclassical Realism as a Framework for Analysis**

Neoclassical realism is a convergence of neorealist and classical realist theories which has proven useful for analysing foreign policy decisions within the framework of realism more generally. Fundamentally, it helps explain state behaviours by looking at the goal and national agenda set by foreign policy decision makers who are seemingly influenced by their perceptions and external environment (Rose, 1998). Rose (1998) contends that the implementation/outcome of foreign policy varies from one state to another; thus each specific case of one particular country is of core importance. Moreover, this theory aims at 'examining the role of state and seeking to explain why, how, and under what conditions the internal characteristics of states intervene between their leaders' assessments of international threats and

opportunities, and [...] foreign policies those leaders are likely to pursue' (Taliaferro, Ripsman, & Lobell, 2009).

Accordingly, the external environment shapes foreign policy decisions, the leader's perception and domestic factors (Chandra, 2017; Rose, 1998; Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2009, 2016). Rose contends that "The scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy are driven first and foremost by the international system and its relative material power capabilities". Nonetheless, foreign policy decisions must also be influenced by intervening variables (domestic factors) (1998, p. 146). Similarly, Chandra and Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell argue that the neoclassical realism theory incorporates various intervening variables in explaining the state behaviour and foreign policy options. Among those variables are leader perception, which is the most critical intervening variable, domestic politics and state structure (Chandra, 2017; Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016, p. 58).

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, the co-authors of *Neoclassical Theory of International Politics*, (2016), contend that state leaders do not always perceive and correctly respond to the international system since it does not always explicitly reveal a precise signal. This unclear circumstance can, therefore, affect their state's security. Neoclassical realism emphasises not only interpreting and explaining the state's foreign policy options but also predicting any possible foreign policy choices that the states are likely to make (Chandra, 2017). The study views that this argument is fundamental to identifying, analysing and interpreting foreign policy choices of threatened states.

Moreover, through the framework of realism, Rose has identified four schools of foreign policy theory. The first one is *Innenpolitik* theory which prioritises the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy. The other three schools all stress the role of the international system in influencing the state. Domestic factors include politics, ideology, socioeconomic structure and others. Offensive realism (or aggressive realism), the second school, posits that systemic factors are critically dominant in foreign policy decisions. The third school is defensive realism which argues that systemic factors influence only some areas of state behaviour. The last one is

neoclassical realism which includes both internal and external variables in explaining the influence of foreign policy decisions (Rose, 1998, pp. 145–146).

Therefore, the theory of neoclassical realism provides a flexible analytical framework for examining a state's position in the international system while also considering the impact of its leaders' perception and other factors on the development and limitation of foreign policy choices. In this regard, a comprehensive study of domestic intervening variables should be taken in order to perceive the whole picture of foreign policy decisions.

Therefore the study has identified and adopted three key aspects affecting foreign policy decision and implementation: the external environment (or systematic factors), leaders' perception (or cognitive variable) and internal factors. The study will employ these aspects to frame its two case studies.

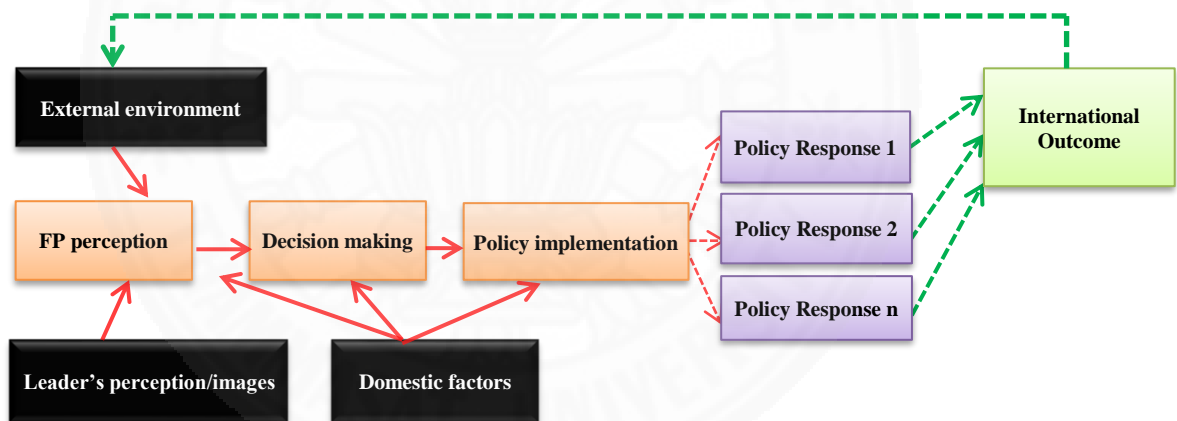


Figure 2.1 Theoretical framework of neoclassical realism

Source: The framework based on the neo-classical realism theory by Gideon Rose (1998) and Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016, p. 59.

The study views that this framework is very important in shaping the analysis of Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions and implementation.

### 2.2.2 Conceptual Framework

To frame its approach to data collection, as well as to analyse and interpret the data, the study would apply an approach called Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as its concise conceptual framework by analysing the impact of external and domestic factors based on KR's leadership and perceptions.

- **Independent variable:** external environment (international and regional context, China's foreign aid) and leader's perception, domestic factors.

- **Dependent variable:** Khmer Rouge foreign policy formation, decisions and implementation as well as foreign relations

The analysis of foreign policy in this study seeks to use different theories in order to understand and interpret the foreign policy-making process, and its implementation and outcomes, Webber et al. (2002) note that states have three important goal- interests, survival and security- which can be incorporated into foreign policy formation in three important contexts as follows:

- International context focusing on a number of factors in determining the hierarchies of power and influence in international politics. These factors encompass military, economy, politics and geography.

- Governmental context involving three compelling components that can determine the government's foreign policy behaviours. These core components are types of regime, decision makers and bureaucrats.

- Domestic context involving national identity or cultural characteristics which can determine the position of the state at in the global context.

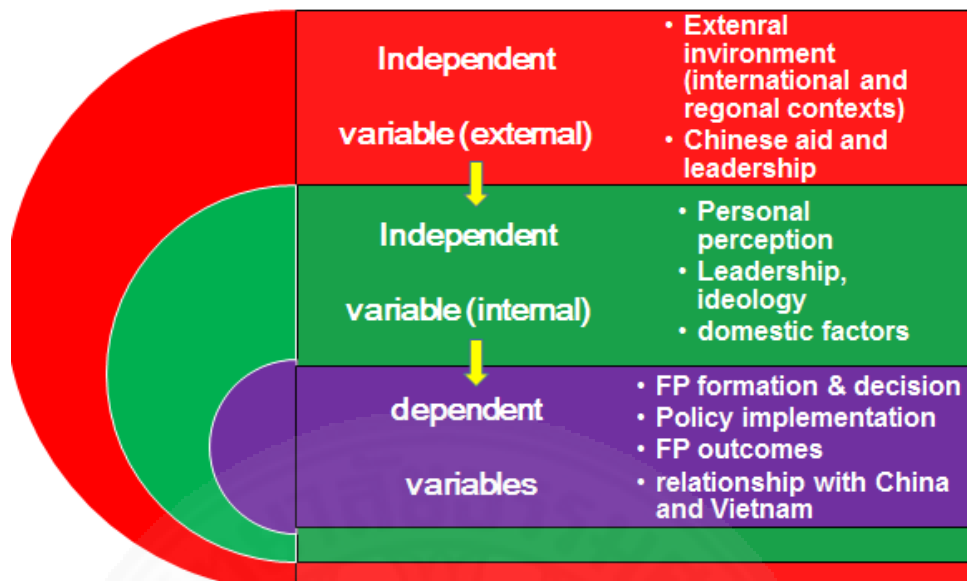


Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework for Khmer Rouge's foreign policy analysis

Source: Author's own calculation based on the theory of neo-classical realism by Gideon Rose (1998), Webber et al (2002) and (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016)

### 2.2.3 Data Collection Process

Data collection process was carried out through archive research covering books, journals and other relevant publications as well as field work through intensive interviews with four Cambodian scholars specialised in the Khmer Rouge. The study employed a semi-structured interview with the specialists. They include a researcher and executive director of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia and three Cambodian scholars who are also the lecturers and authors of many Khmer Rouge books such as *Khmer Rouge, Cambodia in Vietnam War from 1953 and 1979*, *Cambodia's Foreign Relations in Regional and Global Contexts*.

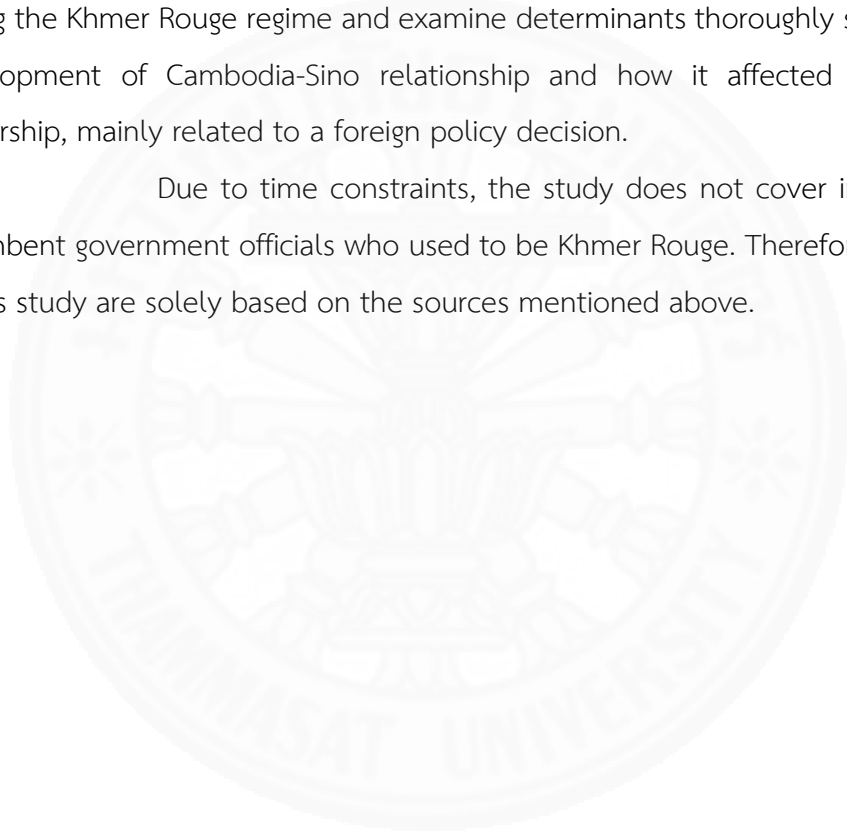
There are two types of data: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as meeting minutes, speeches, reports and other official documents of Khmer Rouge's government were collected from Cambodia, especially from the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), Bophanna Center, and the Extraordinary Chamber in Court of Cambodia (ECCC) known as Khmer Rouge tribunal. Meanwhile, secondary sources such as books, journals, relevant dissertations, news articles, ebooks, historical and statistical documents, academic journals were collected

from the available online and other databases such as SAGE, JSTOR, ISEAS, and TU library. The data obtained from the interviews was used to support and verify the collected sources.

#### **2.2.4 Scope and Limitation**

The study focuses on the influence of China over the Khmer Rouge's foreign policy and how its relations with China and Vietnam were shaped. Given the timeframe from 1975 to 1979, the study will capture only pivotal events taking place during the Khmer Rouge regime and examine determinants thoroughly stimulating the development of Cambodia-Sino relationship and how it affected Khmer Rouge leadership, mainly related to a foreign policy decision.

Due to time constraints, the study does not cover interviews with incumbent government officials who used to be Khmer Rouge. Therefore, the findings of this study are solely based on the sources mentioned above.





## CHAPTER 3

### CASE STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA ON KHMER ROUGE'S FOREIGN POLICY

This case study examines China's influence on Khmer Rouge foreign policy decision and implementation. It seeks to answer the first key question 'To what extent did China influence Khmer Rouge's foreign policy and relations?' Based on a framework of neoclassical realism, the study chiefly focuses on three aspects: the external environment, leaders' perception and intervening domestic factors (political and socio-economic issues).

The study contends that China is a significant factor influencing Pol Pot's foreign policy decision-making. In the pursuit of the national interests of absolute independence and self-reliance through his extremely radical changes in domestic policies, Pol Pot could not survive as a leader without strong support from China. Thus, he needed to form foreign policies that were consistent with Chinese ambition in order to secure his leadership and the survival of his regime. To support this argument, the study seeks to analyse and interpret the collected data in light of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks already described in Chapter 2.

#### **3.1 Analysis of the External Environment (Threats and Opportunities)**

The analysis of the Pol Pot's perception of the external environment includes Pol Po's views of global and regional powers. In this regard, the study identifies the US and the USSR as global powers, China as a regional power in the Indochina region and Vietnam as a mounting security threat to Pol Pot's regime. It will examine Pol Pot's perceptions of each of them and how his perception shaped the Khmer Rouge's foreign policy decisions and implementation.

### 3.1.1 Pol Pot's Perception on Friends and Foes

Pol Pot grasped power through the revolutionary peasantry force and ruled Cambodia, under the official name of Democratic Kampuchea (DK), from 1975 to 1979. He was Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea and Khmer Rouge Supreme leader. As such, he made every high profile decision. Thus, the analysis of his perception of friends and foes is critical for the further understanding of his foreign policy formation in dealing with the external environment. Alex Mintz and Karl De Roeyn (2010), co-authors of *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, emphasize the personal characteristics of the leader as a key variable influencing foreign policy decisions, be it in a newly established government, a tyrannical regime or even during regime change (pp. 97-98). Their argument is certainly applicable to the Khmer Rouge which was ruled by a single tyrannical leader.



Figure 3.1 Leadership structure of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (1976-1978)

This photo depicts Pol Pot as a top leader and secretary of CPK. It was taken at Choeung Ek Genocidal Center ('the killing fields' of Cambodia) by Elaine Pratley (2011).

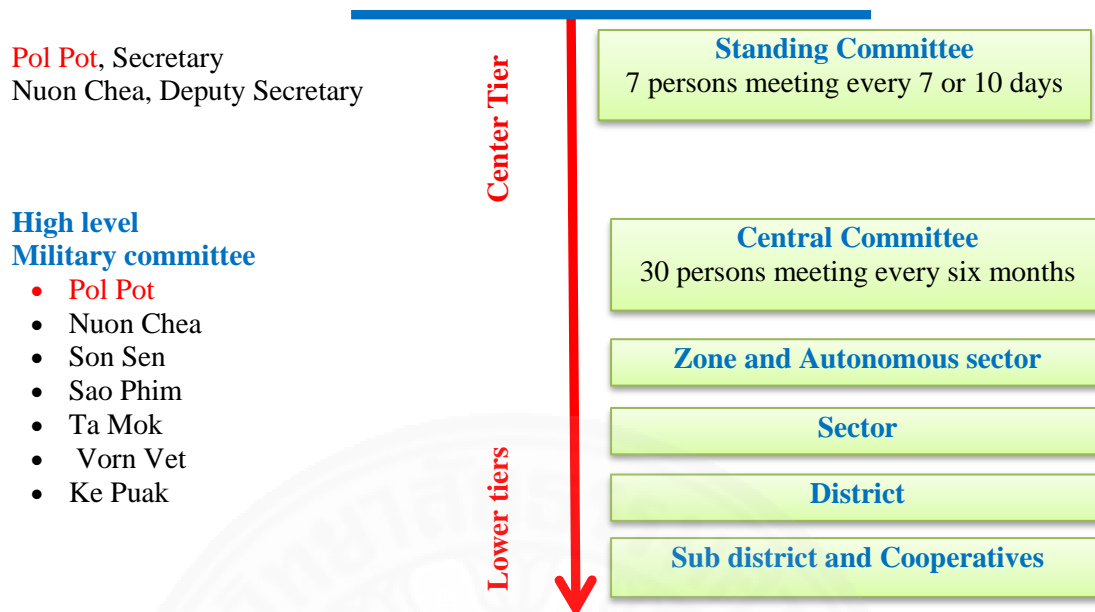


Figure 3.2 Diagram of the Communist Party of Kampuchea

This diagram shows the hierarchy of the military and party leadership in which Pol Pot is always at the top. All reports and information were reported vertically. Thus, examining his perception is obviously crucial for the analysis of foreign policy decision and implementation Source (Bophanna Center, 2017).

Early in his leadership, Pol Pot had already identified his regime's friends and enemies. With the clear-cut identification between friend and enemy, Pol Pot could make his foreign policy decisions accordingly. He was firmly resolute in his existing cognitive distinction between enemy and friend. Naturally, this resolute firm belief would seemingly benefit Pol Pot's friends and bring disadvantages to the foes in his foreign relations. The study will find out how Pol Pot's perception of friend and foe affected Cambodia's foreign relations with the outside world, especially with global superpowers (the U.S and USSR), China and Vietnam.

Apparently, Pol Pot defined friends as those who shared the same policy of independence, peace, neutrality and non-alignment based on mutual respect and equal footing as stipulated in the DK constitution. In this aspect, he attached great importance to friendship with third world countries, who struggled against all forms of foreign influence, especially against imperialism, expansionism and hegemonism. An

indication of Pol Pot's personal convictions on friendship and rivalry comes in a 1978 Phnom Penh radio broadcast: "We respect and love friends who are good to us, who respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia, and who deal with us on equal footing."<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, Pol Pot obviously perceived other states as rivals when they tried to exert whatever influence on other states and to interfere into those states' affairs in the attainment of their national interests.

### 3.1.2 The U.S and the USSR in the Eyes of Pol Pot

With reference to the above definition, both the US and the USSR were already listed in this antagonizing group in Pol Pot's lens. He stated:

"The concrete situation has clearly shown that imperialism and foreign reactionaries have been harbouring the strategic and fundamental intention of threatening and placing our Cambodian in their claws. [...] foreign enemies want to violate, encroach upon, threaten and take away our Cambodian territory. [...] we must remain highly vigilant in order to cope with all eventual aggressive and proactive attempt of the enemy" (Pol Pot, 1977).

Pol Pot (1977) also alleged that the targeted enemies were in the form of various spy rings working for international imperialists and reactionaries. These agents were among the Khmer Rouge itself, trying to subvert the Cambodian revolution through various seditious activities. To cope with these threats, Pol Pot explicitly issued two directives as set forth in the party line in 1960: (1) make the national revolution by eliminating imperialism, (2) carry out democratic revolution by eliminating the feudal landowner and reactionary comprador system from Cambodian society.

### 3.1.3 Vietnam in the Eyes of Pol Pot

Among antagonists, Pol Pot seemingly perceived Vietnam as the greatest enemy of the Cambodian revolution. This was implicitly mentioned at the

---

<sup>8</sup>Quoted from "The Cambodian People Firmly Adhere to the Stands of Independence, Mastery, and Self-Reliance and Clearly Distinguish Friends and Foes, the World Over" Phnom Penh Radio Domestic Service, January 20, 1978, in FBIS-APA-78, January 20, 1978, cited in Morris, 1999, p. 85

July 1971 CPK congress, where it was which decided to break with Vietnam. Subsequently, some slogans used to inspire nationalism against Vietnam in 1972 were ‘Drive out the Vietnamese’, ‘Cambodia and for Cambodian’ and ‘the Vietnamese are uninvited guests’ (Morris, 1999, p. 99). Even after becoming the leader in 1975, Pol Pot still regarded Vietnam as his ‘main enemy’, fearing that it would continuously torment his regime. Further, he obviously viewed Cambodian communist cadres, known as Khmer Viet Minh, who had been trained by North Vietnam and dispatched to work with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, as Vietnamese agents. They worked for Vietnam to accomplish the latter’s strategic interest of conquering Indochina (ibid, pp. 69, 73).






| <br>Lon Nol<br>Officials | <br>Vietnamese<br>Agents | <br>CIA<br>Agents | <br>KGB<br>Agents | <br>Alleged<br>Enemies |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Soon after their victory, the Khmer Rouge eliminated officials and soldiers of the defeated regime         | Ethnic Vietnamese and Khmer who were accused of being Vietnamese agents                                    | The Khmer Rouge believed that there were agents from the U.S. hidden in Cambodia                    | The Khmer Rouge believed that there were agents from Soviet Union hidden in Cambodia                 | The Khmer Rouge constituted some daily actions as crimes. eg. eating food individually                     |

Figure 3.3 List of Khmer Rouge’s alleged enemies

Source: (Bophanna Center, 2017)

### 3.1.4 China in the Eyes of Pol Pot

In pursuit of full independence and self-mastery based on equal footing and mutual respect, Pol Pot saw China as his great friend. He was distinctly impressed by Chairman Mao Tse-Tung’s leadership and the s wholehearted hospitality

extended to him based on equality, mutual support and respect. For instance, Pol Pot stressed that he was warmly welcomed by the Chinese Communist party leaders in his first visit to China in 1966 prior to the Cultural Revolution. He mentioned that “Our Chinese friends wholeheartedly supported our political line. [...] Our Chinese friends were united with us in the analysis of class in society, in the determination of class and in the division between friends and foes in Cambodia in the context of the new democratic revolution” (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, p. 79).

Pol Pot also emphasized that the great friendship and militant solidarity between the two countries were resolutely built on ‘the same and perfect revolutionary ideology, and sincere respect, love and support each other on the basis of the principles of equality and faithful mutual respect’ (Pol Pot, 1978b). He underlined that this fraternal friendship would continue to be strengthened and flourish in accordance with the Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung thought (Peking Review, 1977, pp. 23–30). Meanwhile, Hau Kuo-feng, Chairman of the CPP Central Committee and Premier of State Council, stated, “This friendship and unity are based on Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. We always sympathize with encouraging and supporting each other. [...] The Chinese and Kampuchean peoples are close comrades-in-arms and brothers sharing weal and woe” (ibid, pp. 20-22). Thus, Pol Pot clearly regarded China as his ally based on the latter’s support and warm cordiality.

In summary, Pol Pot’s perception on the identification of friend and foe is very important for his foreign policy decisions, direction and implementation. First, it helped him set up policies to deal with his perceived foes and to escape from their threats. Second, it helped shape the direction of alliance building for enduring friendship, mutual support and struggle for the attainment of national interest and independence. Based on Pol Pot’s assumption, the US, USSR, and Vietnam were in the group of foes, while China and other oppressed countries in the third world were friends. How does this emotional judgment affect his foreign policy will be investigated in the next section.

### 3.1.5 Pol Pot's Perception of External Threats

In reference to Pol Pot's defining of friends and foes as discussed earlier, the external threats to his regimes were the US, USSR, Vietnam and their respective agents. Among this antagonizing group of foes, Vietnam was seemingly the most dangerous rival in Pol Pot's perception since he always feared the Vietnamese intention to take over Cambodia. He stressed that:

“After liberation 17 April 1975, the enemies from outside always wanted to take possession of Democratic Kampuchea and subjugate her. These enemies included the U.S imperialists, the USSR international expansionists as well as the Vietnamese and their followers. The USSR has a global strategy to control Southeast Asia. To accomplish this objective, they need to solve the problem of Cambodia, which is their obstacle. If they succeed in the invasion of Kampuchea, they would continue their thrust in Southeast Asia. Therefore, USSR and Vietnam have united together to attack our country” (Pol Pot, 1978c).

After working with Vietnamese communist military unit named Office 100 in north-eastern Cambodia, which shares a border with Vietnam, since his early revolutionary struggle in 1955, Pol Pot obviously had some knowledge on the latter's purpose for Cambodia. He insisted that “the movement (the ICP and the section responsible for the Cambodian left) was nothing more than a façade for hidden agenda of Vietnam to absorb all of Indochina after independence”<sup>9</sup> (Boraden, 2013, p. 1). He further stated that Vietnam had never abandoned the ambition of an Indochina Federation plan made in 1930. Its plan was to have a single state in Indochina with one party, one army, and one country. Pol Pot also explained that to realize the unity of Indochina, Vietnam had first tried to apply peaceful and friendly means through

---

<sup>9</sup> Black Paper: The Indochina Federation Strategy of Ho Chi Minh's Indochina Communist Party, Office of propaganda and information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DK, Search for the Truth, No. 9, September 2000 cited by Boraden, the Khmer Rouge, 2013, p.1



various accords or treaties, especially focussing on cooperation in the fields of economy, armed forces and politics. Its intended goal was to eliminate the borders and make Cambodia part of its country<sup>10</sup> (Searching for the Truth, 2001, pp. 2–5).

In an official document called the “Black Paper”, the Khmer Rouge elaborated some facts about the Vietnamese attempt to annex Cambodia as part of its Indochina Federation plan. This official document depicts seven chapters outlining Vietnam’s manoeuvres to overthrow the Khmer Rouge Regime through various means including a series of small and large-scale armed attacks, a military coup by its concealed agents inside Cambodia, and other methods of posing threats and pressure, forcing DK to accept its proposed negotiation. In short, this Black Paper perceived Vietnam as an aggressor who was obsessed with an attempt to smash DK and ultimately annex Cambodia into its Indochina Federation ambition (DK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1978).

Moreover, there were an estimated 20,000 Vietnamese troops inside Cambodian territory during Pol Pot’s leadership (Ciorciari, 2014b, p.218). Further, many Khmer communists who had ties or direct contact with Vietnam also worked with the Khmer Rouge regime. This group had received extensive political indoctrination and military training from the latter (CIA Report, 1973). The presence of Vietnamese troops, in addition to the Cambodian communist groups from Vietnam, was an additional threat to Pol Pot.

In Sophal posits that Pol Pot started to turn away from Vietnam and prepared himself for any conflict with Vietnam after his achievement of ‘national salvation’ in 1975. He points out that in 1969, there had been a split between the two biggest communist blocs, the USSR and China. These big communist states became enemies under the triangle policy of the U.S. This led to the caution in the relationship between Pol Pot and Vietnam because Vietnam needed Cambodia land to fight against South Vietnam, and Pol Pot needed Viet Cong forces to topple Lon Nol. Thus, this interdependence allowed both sides to overcome their obstacles. Pol Pot was able to

---

<sup>10</sup> The interview between Pol Pot and western Journalist on 12 April 1978 published by DC-CAM Magazine Finding the Truth, No 16, 2001, pp.2-5



overthrow Lon Nol regime on April 17, 1975. The Vietcong was also managing to defeat South Vietnam on 30 April 1975. Nonetheless, after gaining triumph, both sides no longer depended on each other. Pol Pot abided by Maoism supported by China and Vietnam continued to execute Marx-Lenin communism backed by the USSR.

In Sophal further stated that Pol Pot always suspected the Vietnamese ambition of swallowing Cambodia territory. Meanwhile, Pol Pot was also concerned about a USSR secret agent named KGP who he believed was trying to murder him in order to transfer power to the Eastern Zone under the leadership of Sor Pim, who was allegedly under the influence of Vietnam. This was why Pol Pot increased the number of military personnel in the areas bordered with Vietnam with the prospect that Vietnam would invade Cambodia. As a result, the two communist blocs contained one another.

### **3.1.6 Pol Pot's Perception on External Opportunity**

To deal with these external critical threats, Pol Pot needed to approach China. The motive of Pol Pot's rapprochement towards China was apparently to mitigate the external threats imposed by the international environment and the Vietnamese attempt to unify Indochina. Thus, he wanted to utilize China's support, especially the economic and military assistance, to take Cambodia out of foreign influence and dominance, especially the Vietnamese interference into its domestic affairs. Approaching China for security protection and assistance seemingly helped his regime survive while he was trying to escape from the external threats and the Vietnamese influence. Why did Pol Pot move so quickly to China? The study notes two major reasons as the following:

Firstly, only China provided significant support and assistance to his regime even before and after the liberation. During its struggle, the Khmer Rouge received about US\$ 2 million per year from China to strengthen its revolutionary force. After liberation in 1975, the Khmer Rouge continued to obtain more and more Chinese aid from year to year (Mertha, 2014). Moreover, at least 5,000 Chinese technician and advisers were deployed to work in DK and assist Pol Pot and his Standing Committee (Diplomat, 2011). Youk Chhang also confirmed that "the extent of the Chinese presence during the four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge were all the way to the top

leader, but China has never admitted” (The New York Times, 2015). Nonetheless, the study could not find any articles or archival documents narrating the roles of Chinese advisers in assisting Pol Pot and its standing committee in leadership and political decision.

Secondly, Pol Pot gave high priority to mutual respect and non-interference. China did not care much about domestic issues as long as Cambodia was on its side to counter expansionism, imperialism and hegemonism against the two superpowers (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, pp. 78–79). Chairman Mao during his meeting with Pol Pot on June 21, 1975, underlined that “we approved you! A lot of your experiences are better than ours. China has no right to criticize you. You are basically correct. About the shortcoming, I am not clear. It always has, you should correct by yourselves” (Julio, 2000). The study views that Chairman Mao, by saying the said words, wanted to avoid interference into Cambodia’s domestic affairs and to convince Pol Pot to enduringly stay with China.

The study notes that equal footing and mutual respect was very important to Pol Pot. He deemed the reception welcoming him and Cambodian delegation in Beijing in 1977 as a solid proof of everlasting friendship between the two countries. “We consider this reception and welcome accorded to us by the comrades as a vivid testimony of the great, unbreakable and everlasting militant solidarity and revolutionary friendship between our two parties, peoples and governments,” said Pol Pot (Peking review, 1977, pp. 23-30). Moreover, the research by Goscha and Engelbert (1995) also revealed that equal footing and warm hospitality were so important to Pol Pot. The account below provides some clues as to why Pol Pot, while in Vietnam in mid-1965, turned his back on it but moved closer to China during his trip to both countries from 1965 to 1966:

‘Saloth Sar (real name of Pol Pot) presented his 1960 program to his Vietnamese opposite number, Le Duan, only to find the document sharply criticised..... Daun, who is a top Vietnamese Communist leader at that time, took issue with its naiveté, its nationalist focus and its insubstantial, faulty Marxism, telling Sar that his program was ineptly

worded and irrelevant. He asked Sar to postpone armed struggle until it suited Vietnamese' (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, pp. vi-vii).

However, after leaving Vietnam, Pol Pot continued his journey to China, in early 1966, when the Cultural Revolution was about to happen. In China, he experienced almost the opposite atmosphere compared to his time in Vietnam:

'China admired his pleasingly Maoist notion of independent revolution. When coming back, Pol Pot changed the party name and followed Maoist models of revolution and practise the revolutionary program' (ibid, p.vii).

The hospitalities Vietnam and China extended to Pol Pot were quite different, and perhaps they were the trigger that pushed Pol Pot to tilt to China. Vietnam regarded itself as superior to Cambodia and this was reflected in a patronizing approach to its neighbour. This might have arisen because Vietnam was the first supporter and founder of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1930 and satellite communist parties in Cambodia and Lao between 1950-1951 (ibid, p. iv). In this regard, Pol Pot was likely regarded as a follower, with inferior status to Vietnam. However, he seemingly gained more value and importance from China which not only supported his idea of independence and self-reliance but also welcomed him with high respect and great fraternal friendship. Thus, these different hospitalities also help explain one of many reasons why Pol Pot was gradually distancing himself from Vietnam and sided closely with China.

### 3.2 Analysis of Pol Pot's Perception in Leading the Country

Pol Pot's ambition was to accomplish a rapid transformation of war-ravaged Cambodia into an ideal communal agrarian utopia, which would be stronger than either China and Vietnam. In this sense, he had a dream of restoring Cambodia to the glories of Khmer Empire era. He emphasized that the Khmer Rouge, after liberation, would continue to defend the country, carry on the socialist revolution and edify socialism (Pol Pot, 1978a, pp. 19–21).

The study argues that in his endeavour to rebuild Cambodia to the past glorious Angkor era, Pol Pot was likely to follow Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's concept of self-reliance, people's war and the significance of human (mass) power. Morris (1999) posited that Pol Pot's policies were seemingly inspired by two Maoist ideological concepts: 'self-reliance and subjective factors of human will and ideology in winning over objective material factors' (pp.74-75). Etcheson, the author of the Rise and Fall of Democratic also agreed that Chairman Moa's concepts of stages of the revolution and people's war were embedded into CPK's declaratory and operational behaviour (1984, p. 22).

Pol Pot seemingly adopted and extended Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's ideologies to his own leadership (Chandler, 2018; Etcheson, 1984; Morris, 1999). Former King Norodom Sihanouk also confirmed that Mao's Cultural Revolution had a special influence on the entire Khmer Rouge leadership (Morris, 1999)

“We believe that we can build up the country quickly... We have only to organize the strategy and tactics to strike in whatever way is necessary. This is the Super Great Leap Forward,” Pol Pot's four-year plan from 1976 to 1980<sup>11</sup> (Morris, 1999, p.71).

For example, in his letter addressed to the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) dated 06 October 1967, Pol Pot reported that

---

<sup>11</sup> Excerpted report on the leading views of the comrade representing the Party Origination at a Zone Assembly” Tung Padevat, June 1976, in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua, eds., Pol Pot Plans the Future, p. 29, and cited by Morris, 1999, p. 71.

“Comrades, in terms of ideological outlook and our revolutionary line, we are preparing the implementation of a people’s war... and will continue to put into effect the revolutionary work according to the line of the people’s war which Chairman Mao Tse-Tung has pointed out in terms of its independence, sovereignty and self-reliance.”<sup>12</sup> Another example prioritizing the human factor as the most important one is the following statement, “The great victory of the Cambodian revolution is based on the stand of political conscience and revolutionary morals, [...] human factor is the key and that the material factor is only the secondary”<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, Chairman Mao’s idea and experiences might be the basis of Pol Pot’s policy in leading his party struggle to obtain national liberation and in ruling the country. On June 21, 1975, during the meeting between Chairman Mao, Pol Pot confirmed that the concept of Chairman Mao had guided the CPK. He stated that “I have read many books of Chairman Mao since I was young especially about the People’s war. The books of Chairman Mao have guided our whole party” (Julio, 2000). Further, Pol Pot, himself, at the Peking banquet on September 28, 1977, stressed that ‘Mao Tse-Tung’s thought is the inspiration behind his regime’s policies’<sup>14</sup> (Morris, 1999, p. 70).

Pol Pot always admired and highly respected Chairman Mao. He underscored that the latter’s thought was the most effective and sharp ideological and political weapon which guided his struggle to victory, and the latter always personally supported and encouraged him. He further stated that Chairman Mao and Comrade Chou En-lai granted Cambodia people whole-hearted, unconditional and all-

---

<sup>12</sup> As quoted in Tim Hieu p.44 and Quan Diem, p.14 cited by Engelbert and Goscha (1995), ‘Falling out of Touch’, pp. 80-81

<sup>13</sup> As quoted by FBIS-APA, June 3, 1975, H2, cited in Jackson, ed., Cambodia, p. 74 and in Morris, p. 74

<sup>14</sup> Quoted from NCNA, September 28, 1977, in FBIS-PRC-77-189, September 29, 1977, AI9 , and cited by Morris, 1999, p. 71.

around support and assistance before and after liberation. He emphasized that with continuing commitment from China, Cambodia could stand on its own even better (Peking Review, 1977, pp. 23–30).

Cambodian scholar Youk Chhang, Executive Director of DC-Cam and senior researcher of Khmer Rouge documentation, said that “in comparison between the two country leaders, Chinese leaders were very senior and Cambodian leaders were like teenagers and small, so the latter was in the process of learning from China, and to please China by trying to learn something from China’s experiences. But China, based on a few scripts, warned the Khmer Rouge not to copy Chinese Cultural Revolution to be used in Cambodia because it was not working in China. He added that the Red Book of Chairman Mao prompted the Khmer Rouge to publish its own red flag book. Thus, Khmer Rouge tried to adopt many things from China’s experience during the Cultural Revolution”.

It is likely that Pol Pot was trying to learn from China to lead the revolutionary struggle in Cambodia. For instance, he published his own red book and used some slogans similar to China’s Cultural Revolution (Locard, 2005). Some of the most important mottos included ‘storming attacks, great leaps forward, independence, self-mastery, a clean sweep of the past, relying solely on one’s own strength, three tons (of rice) per hectare, re-education, criticism and self-criticism’ (Chandler, 2018, pp. 3–4; Locard, 2005, pp. 61–90). Another case was his first visit to China in 1965-1966 on the eve of Cultural Revolution when he made friend with high-ranking Chinese official K’ang Sheng<sup>15</sup>. With this friend, he acquired the importance of identifying the hidden enemies within the party (Chandler, 2018, p. 6).

“Our people and the revolutionary people of the world deeply believe that Mao Tse-Tung thought is always efficacious, sharp and victorious. It consists mainly of teaching on building the Party into a solid leading core, on the establishment of a powerful national united front, one

---

<sup>15</sup> K’ang Sheng or Kang Sheng (1898-1975) is one of the eminent senior members of CCP. He is a head of CPP’s intelligent bureau or secret police and responsible for the party’s intelligence and security operations (Alpha History, 2015).

the building of a heroic revolutionary army as well as those on the analysis of the class in society, on contradictions, on practice, on the establishment of rural revolutionary base areas,” said Pol Pot (Peking Review, 1977, pp. 23–30).

In spite of having similar ideological characteristics, Pol Pot had more extreme perception, prioritizing the will of the people as a decisive factor in fostering revolution and socialist construction. Pol Pot mentioned in his future plan:<sup>16</sup>

“Why must we move so swiftly? because enemies attack and torment us. [...] If we are strong and courageous for three or four years, they will be unable to do anything to us”. Kieu Samphan, the head of state, also emphasized that Cambodian needed to work “twice, ten times as hard as the Vietnamese so that Cambodia could become stronger than Vietnam” (Porter, 1982, p. 5).

Pol Pot also issued a mission statement in 1977 with the core focus on ‘storming constant attacks with the great movement of the masses at the speed of great leap forward’. Two core objectives embedded in this statement are striving for the realization of 3-6 tons per hectare for the rice field purely based on pre-modern agrarian techniques with self-mastery using labour force and animal as well as endlessly scrutinizing networks of enemies burrowing inside the country with zero-tolerance and no hesitation (DK Letter of Honorary Red Flag, 1977).

How did Pot Pot lift up the currently war-torn Cambodia to reach the glory of ancient Angkor Empire while almost everything was completely destroyed by the on-going war? It was unlikely possible to do it without China’s support. Kieu Samphan acknowledged that “the new DK faces obstacles in rebuilding Cambodia and counts on China. Chinese support and assistance are always many-sided, extensive, concrete and very pure. The government wishes to lift up the currently war-savaged Cambodia to reach the glory of ancient Angkor empire” (Herald-Tribune, 1975; Ta Kung Pao, 1975;

---

<sup>16</sup> Report of activities of the party center according to the General Political Tasks of 1976 (Party Center, December 20, 1976), in Chandler, Kiernan, Boua and Morris, eds., Pol Pot Plan the Future, p.182

The Washington Post, 1975). In Sophal contended that Chinese aid was so important to Pol Pot because he could not depend on any other countries.

To restore the damaged infrastructure, Pol Pot counted on China. In this regard, the Chinese helped build roads, railways and even a military airstrip. Chinese technicians helped restore, repair or construct a number of industrial facilities, which had been severely damaged during the previous wars (Pol Pot, 1978b). However, due to harsh working conditions and starvation, tens of thousands of Cambodian workers died at the construction sites where Chinese technicians were stationed to monitor the work. For instance, about 30,000 workers were forced to build a huge military airstrip with 1.4 km runway on the area of 300 hectares in Kampong Chhnang province, about 91 km from Phnom Penh capital. Under extreme work conditions, many of them committed suicide by hanging themselves, drowning, poisons and even running into the passing trucks (Diplomat, 2011; Phnom Penh Post, 2000).

For the economic and trade issues, the Khmer Rouge needed China for the large purchase of imported products such as machinery, petroleum, medicines and pharmaceutical products, chemical merchandises, textiles, construction materials and transport equipment. Though the Khmer Rouge had trade with other few countries like Japan, North Korea, its trade volume with them was quite trivial compared to that with China. Moreover, due to its self-reliant policy, the Khmer Rouge had a diplomatic relationship with a quite limited number of countries (Morris, 1999, pp. 76–77). In this regard, China played a crucial role in promoting Khmer Rouge's economic activities.

In conclusion, Pol Pot wanted to build a stronger and better Cambodia so as to avoid a foreign attack on his regime. He was in the process of learning and adopting some experiences from China. However, the extent of applying this knowledge into practice in Cambodia was different from those in China based on his own analysis of the real circumstance in the country and how he perceived both internal and external threats imposing on his power and regime.



### 3.3 Analysis of domestic factors

Apart from rebuilding the country through his ultra-revolutionary concepts, there were mainly two dominant factors lying in Pol Pot's regime. These are fragile leadership and extermination of concealed enemies inside the country.

#### 3.3.1 Maintaining leadership and security

After liberation, Pol Pot was not secure about his power as there were still many other Khmer Rouge factions with different affiliation and because of his endless suspicion of enemies attempting to seize his power back. Originally, there were six separate regional factions joining to overthrow Lon Nol regime (Etcheson, 1984; Thayer, 2012). Nonetheless, Pol Pot could not unite them into the strong unified army under his leadership. As a consequence, they struggled against one another to exert influence and dominance within the framework of the CPK. Ta Mok, one of the KR prominent leaders and standing committee members, said that "there was no central leadership of the Khmer Rouge forces.

To secure power and his own security, Pol Pot made a commitment to rooting out all enemies hidden within the party. He ordered the arrest of suspected party members in different zones ranging from the North, Southwest, Northwest and to the East Zone (Thayer, 2012). The arrest was carried out from the top to village levels everywhere including the party, organization and government institutions (Etcheson, 1984). Further, Pol Pot continued to target those in the army, cadre, ministries and even his standing committee members (Heder, 1990; Mertha, 2014, pp. 5–9; Thayer, 2002). David Chandler underlined that Pol Pot and his followers exhibited a thirst for power and an unlimited aptitude for distrust. He pointed out that "believing himself surrounded by enemies, Pol Pot approved the torture and execution of thousand enemies at S-21 prison" (Chandler, 2018, pp. 3-4). Duch, chief of S21 prison, said: "Whoever is arrested must be killed"; consequently, six of the ten CPK standing committee members were executed during his reign (Thayer, 2012).

When asked why he had to purge KR senior members, Pol Pot responded that because that group of people in the central leadership tried to set up

a coup d'état committee against him and the majority of them were the Vietnamese agents. Among the executed standing committee members was Ya, alias Maen San, who was appointed as a Northeast Zone secretary in 1976 when he was arrested with an accusation of serving as a Vietnamese agent since 1946 (Thayer, 2012).

According to the document obtained from the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) so-called the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, Ya prepared a series of plots to assassinate Pol Pot with various methods ranging from asking someone close to him to poison or shoot him to arranging a coup to oust him at the party rally in Phnom Penh in 1975. He stated:

“Vietnamese did not like Brother number 1 and Brother number 2 and so did comrades from overseas .... So we should assassinate Brothers number 1 and 2 so that there would not be any obstacle for us in applying the political line of our party<sup>17</sup>.[...] We have to make a plan to eliminate Brothers Number 1 and 2 so that we could prosper in the future” (ECCC, 2018).

His series of unsuccessful attempts took place from 1973 till 1976, the year when he was promoted then arrested and killed.

### **3.3.2 Perpetual extermination of hidden enemies**

Another most important domestic issue during Pol Pot's time was 'hidden enemies'. Pol Pot was trying to eliminate all the enemies hidden within the country. On 20 May 1975 Khmer Rouge convened a five-day extraordinary meeting in Phnom Penh participated by thousands of Khmer Rouge cadres from all areas across the country. The purpose of this meeting was to give the Party Centre's instruction on eight-point policy<sup>18</sup> to be carried out in their respective regions. These policies are listed in the table below:

---

<sup>17</sup> According to Khmer Rouge hierarchy Brother number 1 is another nickname of Pol Pot and Brother number 2 refers to Noun Chea

<sup>18</sup> According to an interview between Ben Kierman with Sin Song, Phnom Penh, 12 August 1980. Kierman, Ben. *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, 55 as cited by Bophanna Center, 2017.

Table 3.1

*Khmer Rouge's immediate eight-point policy after seizing power in 1975*

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| DK's 8 point policy | 1. Evacuate people from all towns                  |
|                     | 2. Abolish all markets                             |
|                     | 3. Abolish all currency                            |
|                     | 4. Defrock all Buddhist monks                      |
|                     | 5. Execute all leaders of the Lon Nol regime       |
|                     | 6. Establish high-level cooperatives               |
|                     | 7. Expel the entire Vietnamese minority population |
|                     | 8. Dispatch troops to the borders with Vietnam     |

Source: (Bophanna Center, 2017)

The study contends that the concealed purpose of carrying out these policies was to root out the remaining enemies, to strengthen DK power through enhancing rural peasantry base and to easily control the whole population. However, these policies end up causing more severe reverse impact to the regime such as starvation, loss of human resources and the split of armed forces. To curb the reverse impact, Pol Pot did need China's support.

Soon after seizing power on April 17, 1975, Khmer Rouge evacuated city dwellers to work and live in the countryside across the country. Within one week, the Khmer Rouge could empty all cities, forcing more than one million urban residents to do agricultural tasks in the rural areas (Biography, 2016; Chandler, 2018, p. 1). There were approximately five crucial reasons behind the mass evacuation, including security, food distribution and production problems, ideology-rural-based society, getting full control of urban populace as well as the fear of the return of U.S bombing on the capital (Etcheson, 1984, p. 144). Pol Pot also mentioned two key reasons for evacuating people from Phnom Penh. The first reason was to root out the U.S imperialists and their lackeys whose aim was to destroy the revolution and seize back the power.

Another reason was to solve the economic problem, the food shortage in particular<sup>19</sup> (Department of Press and Information Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DK, 1978).

For the abolishment of money, Ing Sary mentioned in 1996 that it was Pol Pot's fear of CIA using money to employ the agents against the regime. He stated that the currency abolishment would prevent the CIA from carrying out recruiting agents and conducting any activities against Cambodia. The KR regime would have not survived longer than three months if the currency had been in use (Thayer, 2012).

To search for the concealed enemies and track for their information, the Khmer Rouge relied on the rural-based mass to identify, notify and attack the enemies (DK Letter of Honorary Red Flag, 1977). This policy offered more privilege to local base people to observe new people<sup>20</sup> in their daily performance and make a subjective judgement on them. If they do not like them, they would accuse them of a teacher, student, civil servant or soldier of the previous regime. Then it was the end of their lives (Thayer, 2012).

Many scholars share the same view that these policies gave so much disastrous impact on the lives and rights of Cambodian people throughout the KR period. Scholar Youk Chhang contends that "the Khmer Rouge's policies were very extreme. They thought that those policies would restore Cambodian independence and prosperity; but in reality, they cost so many lives of their own population". Approximately about 1.7 million people died of extermination, severe exhaustion, starvation and diseases during this period. These also created a prison without walls in

---

<sup>19</sup> Pol Pot gave an interview with a delegation of visiting Yugoslav journalist on March 17, 1978

<sup>20</sup> During the Khmer Rouge period, there were two types of people in the social group: new citizens (people) and based citizens. New citizens were referred to evacuated people from all towns to the countryside before the revolutionary day, April 17, whereas the based citizens (people) were those of countryside residents living in rural areas before the revolution. The old citizens were treated less severely than the new ones (Chandler, 2018, p. 1).

which all the population were under thorough scrutiny by the KR (Bophanna Center, 2017; Chandler, 2018; Hinton, 1998, pp. 93–94; Kiernan, 2008).



*Figure 3.4* Khmer Rouge's prison without walls

The above figure portrays the complex network of lines which represents the boundaries limiting the movement of people. The crows represent the cadres spying on all people. The bloody mindset of KR leaders caused the greatest catastrophe in Cambodian modern history (source Bophana Center, 2017).

Table 3.2

*The estimated total number of deaths under Pol Pot's leadership, 1975-1979*

| Social group               | 1975 pop.        | Numbers perished | %         |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| <b>'New Citizens'</b>      |                  |                  |           |
| Urban Khmer                | 2,000,000        | 500,000          | 25        |
| Rural Khmer                | 600,000          | 150,000          | 25        |
| Chinese (all urban)        | 430,000          | 215,000          | 50        |
| Vietnamese (urban)         | 10,000           | 10,000           | 100       |
| Lao (rural)                | 10,000           | 4,000            | 40        |
| <b>TOTAL New citizens</b>  | <b>3,050,000</b> | <b>879,000</b>   | <b>29</b> |
| <b>'Base Citizens'</b>     |                  |                  |           |
| Rural Khmer                | 4,500,000        | 675,000          | 15        |
| Khmer Krom                 | 5,000            | 2,000            | 40        |
| Cham (all rural)           | 250,000          | 90,000           | 36        |
| Vietnamese (rural)         | 10,000           | 10,000           | 100       |
| Thai (rural)               | 20,000           | 8,000            | 40        |
| Upland minorities          | 60,000           | 9,000            | 15        |
| <b>TOTAL Base citizens</b> | <b>4,840,000</b> | <b>792,000</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Cambodia</b>            | <b>7,890,000</b> | <b>1,671,000</b> | <b>21</b> |

Source: (Kiernan, n.d., p. 84).

Concerning enemy elimination, the study notices the correlation between an increase of Chinese aid and Pol Pot's expansion in purging his internal enemies. For instance, in April 1975 when the Khmer Rouge received Chinese aids in the form of food and technical assistance, it also started a purge campaign targeting the old exploiting classes such as the intellectual, urban bourgeois, previous regime officials and monks.

Moreover, in 1976, the aid soared up as China further pledged to offer 'one thousand tons of military hardware, including tanks, military vehicles, ammunition, and communication equipment'<sup>21</sup> among others to DK. Meanwhile, China also planned to build a weapon factory in the country. Another purge emerged but at different groups. Pol Pot this time sought to purge political malfeasance within the regime, especially

<sup>21</sup> Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, p. 136.

those in Northwest Zone who received political and military training from North Vietnam. The aid continued to increase in numbers as of September 1978 in spite of Chinese warning to the regime not to act so aggressively against its own people and Vietnam. Nevertheless, the internal purge continued to include the Eastern Zone sharing a border with Vietnam in 1977 and 1978, causing the death of its Zone Secretary So Phim (Mertha, 2014, pp. 5–9).

There were thousands of political prisoners detained and tortured in the S-21 political prison in which most of the detainees were forced fiercely to make a confession of the betrayal of the regime by acting as agents of CIA or the Vietnamese communists. Among the prisoners were also many of high-ranking CPK members whom Pol Pot perceived as enemies. They were from the Party Central Committee, Standing Committee, the party's Political Bureau and Secretariat (Heder, 1990).

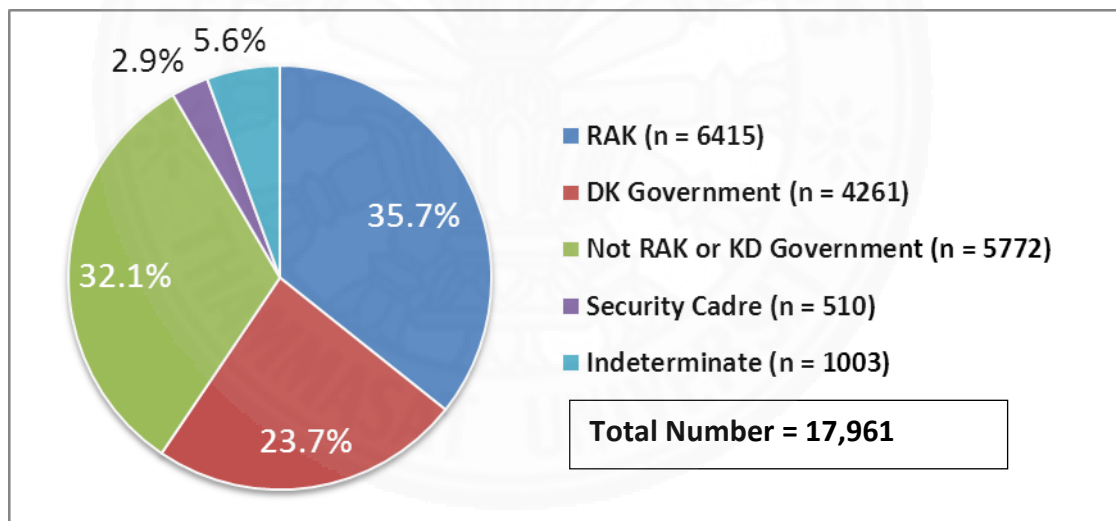


Figure 3.5 Origin of Prisoners at S-21

Source: Bophana Center, 2017 (Note: RAK is a short form of Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea)



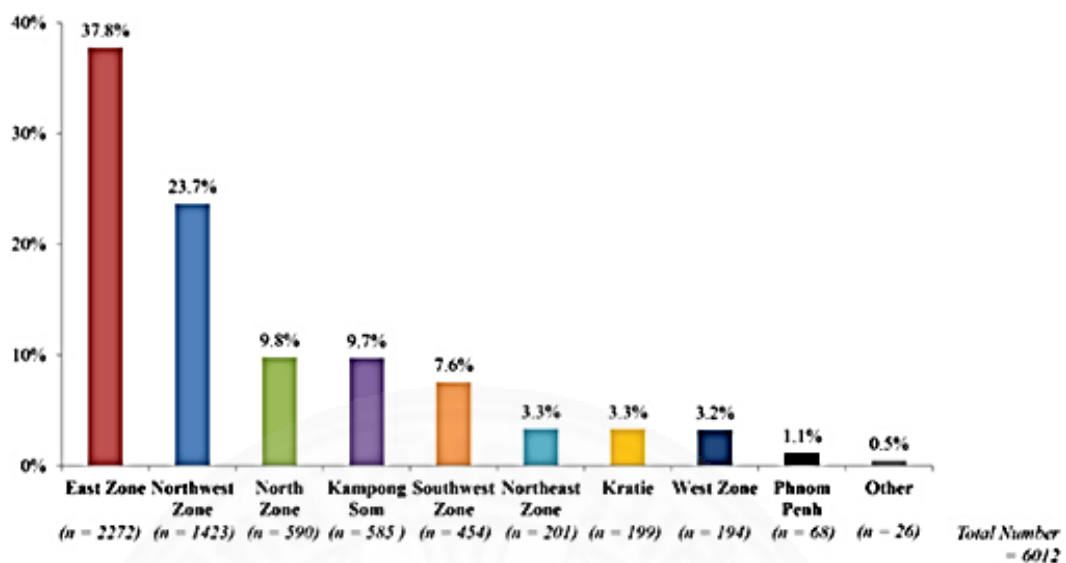


Figure 3.6 Percentages of Prisoners by Zone at S-21

Source: Bophana Center, 2017

In conclusion, Pol Pot profoundly depended on China to deal with these two most important domestic issues. With China's strong support, Pol Pot continued to extend his purge campaign in order to secure his leadership and rout out all accused enemies. However, his ultra-arduous ruling caused millions of Cambodian people and ended up heavily relying on China for survival.

### 3.4 Cambodia's Foreign Policy under Pol Pot's Leadership

The study argues that Khmer Rouge's foreign policy was hugely influenced by Pol Pot's personal perceptions in pursuance of national interests and security assurance. These interests embrace independence, self-reliance, survival and sovereignty. To this end, he formed foreign policies that limited the options of seeking foreign assistance and interaction with other countries outside the third world group. These policies paved the way for the close alliance with and reliance on China.



### 3.4.1 Factors Shaping Foreign Policy

Generally, foreign policy refers to ‘a policy pursued by a state in its dealings with other states. It is designed to obtain the set national objectives’ (onlinedictionary.com, n.d.). Marijke Breuning delineates it broadly as ‘a country’s policies and interaction with the environment beyond its borders’ (2007, p. 5). It is generally viewed as a collection of objectives that each state seeks to interface other states in pursuit of its domestic economic, social, cultural and political interests. Its overall objective is to safeguard and maintain the national interests, security, independence, sovereignty, economic prosperity and ideological objectives of the state.

More specifically, Webber and Smith (2002) define it as the ways states have been dealing with others so as to address the challenges imposed by the significantly transformed world. It consists of four key elements that each state intends to constitute when addressing foreign relations: ‘goals sought, values set, decisions made and actions implemented’. In this regard, the foreign policy shapes the design, supervision and control of external relations of national societies to reap the national interests, and its study pays great attention to four factors such as size, status, resources and humankind of the state (Webber & Smith, 2002, pp. 31–32).

Foreign policy decisions are made by individuals or groups whose decisions not only have an effect on the nation’s actions but also involve ‘high stakes, enormous uncertainty, and substantial risk’. To mitigate risk and advance the interests of the country, decision makers into account their relative material power, domestic resources and the state of the international arena. In this regard, there are four determinants shaping foreign policy decisions: psychological factors (or the leader’s perception), the decision environment, international, and domestic factors (Renshon 2008; Mintz & DeRouen Jr., 2010, p.3) as demonstrated in the below figure.

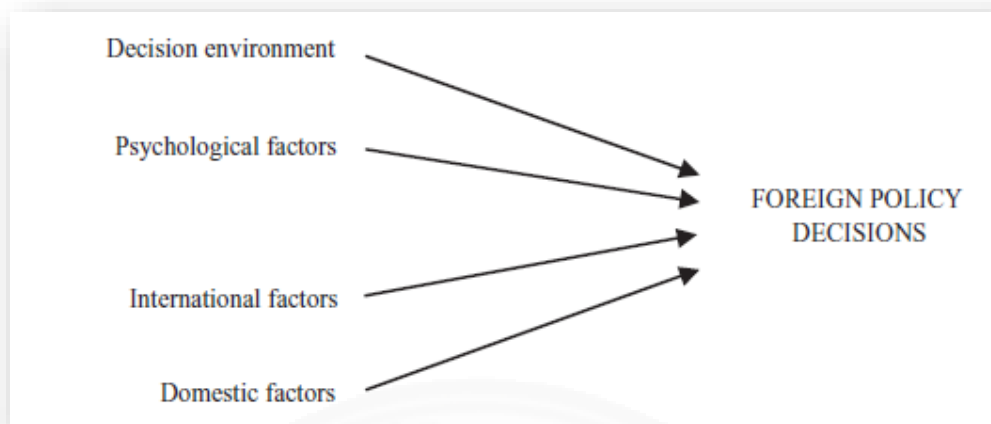


Figure 3.7 determinants shaping foreign policy decision

Source: Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making (Mintz & DeRouen Jr., 2010)

This succinct figure enables foreign policy analysts to focus on the key factors affecting foreign policy decisions. However, not all factors have the same effect and value in influencing the decision. In this context, the study assumes that psychological factors, which examines leader's perception, is the most influential among the four because of the unique, extreme and radical nature of the Khmer Rouge regime, and specific ideological and security reasons in the complex conditions of power competition in Indochina.

### 3.4.2 Pol Pot's Cambodia Foreign Policy (1975-1979)

As shown by its recent history, Cambodia's foreign policy after independence was immensely influenced by its leaders' perceptions in dealing with both internal and external threats in pursuance of national interests and survival (Path et al., 2017). Moreover, Morris finds that 'the study of individual leadership personality is very relevant to the study of foreign policy decision making' (Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia, 1999, p. 10). In this respect, the study focuses more on leader perceptions of foreign policy analysis, in addition to the external environment and domestic factors.

The study argues that to get rid of all forms of foreign influence and to obtain full support from China, Pol Pot stipulated foreign policies that ran parallel to what China wanted. These policies included adherence to independence, peace, neutrality and non-alignment, no foreign military bases, refusal of all means of

intervention, as well as promotion of solidarity with the Third World countries to oppose imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism (DK Constitution, 1975; Pol Pot, 1978a, pp. 19–21). See Appendix B for the full text of DK foreign policies.

In attainment of the aforementioned foreign policy objectives, Pol Pot was compelled to form an alliance with China because the latter had helped the regime since the struggle against US imperialism, pledged \$1 billion in aid and dispatched many Chinese advisers and technicians to assist him with leadership (Ciorciari, 2014b, p. 217; Gough, 1986, pp. 22; 41).

### 3.4.3 Implication of Pol Pot's Foreign Policy

Getting support from a big power like China was not an easy task for a small and fragile state like Cambodia. In this regard, his policy and decision needed to be compatible with China's wishes in spite of no coercion imposed. For example, the aforesaid foreign policies explicitly limited the options for Pol Pot to seek external support and assistance from the outside world. Instead, they paved way for ever-closer tilting to the third world group, which has been initially promoted by China. These foreign policies were similar to what China had proposed and agreed with the US in its joint Sino-US communiqué made in Shanghai in 1972<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the more Pol Pot strictly adhered to these policies, the more rigorously he pushed Cambodia closer only to China.

Further, in the Cambodia-China joint communiqué on economic and trade cooperation held on August 20, 1975, in Beijing, both parties proclaimed their solid determination to unite, support each other and advance together in their common struggle against colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism<sup>23</sup>. The statement also reiterated both countries' pledge to join great effort with the other third world

---

<sup>22</sup> For the full text of this joint communiqué, see Appendix D.

<sup>23</sup> Cambodia/China Joint Communiqué was made during a visit of Cambodia delegation headed by Kieu Samphan, deputy prime minister, and Ieng Sary, foreign minister, to China on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1978 as filed in DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D65153

countries for the realization of full independence, sovereignty, and economic development (Ta Kung Pao, 1975).

Though facing severe difficulty in rebuilding the country, Pol Pot did not seek any foreign assistance since it would oppose his political line and foreign policies. In his four-year socialist construction plan, Pol Pot insisted that “we have no assistance from outside for industry or agriculture.... Broadly speaking, other [socialist] countries were greatly assisted by foreign capital after liberation. For us, at present, there is some Chinese aid, but there is not very much compared with other countries. This is our Party’s policy. If we go and beg for help we would certainly obtain some, but this would affect our political line.”<sup>24</sup>

Cambodian scholar Path Kosal points out that “the thrust of Khmer Rouge foreign policy was to secure economic and military assistance from a great and powerful friend China. It was one fuelled by irredentist nationalism and nostalgia of ancient Khmer greatness”.

It should be remembered that Cambodia at that time had suffered from recent two-regime collapses; its economy was very delicate, and many people, especially in rural areas, had lost their lives and relatives because of the prolonged civil war, US bombing along the border, malnutrition and starvation. At the same time, almost all industries and factories were closed down. The country was facing calamity in terms of governance, administration and economic-social welfare. Between 1969 and 1973, the US conducted an aerial bombing campaign, dropping more than half a million (539,129) tons on Cambodia, three times as many as it dropped on Japan during World War II. It killed over 100,000 Cambodian people and destroyed almost all infrastructure (Kiernan, 2002, p. 485; Etcheson, 1984, p. 89). Pol Pot did not want to seek external support to rebuild the country as he feared that it was against the party’s line.

To sum up, Pol Pot’s foreign policy not only limited the options of seeking foreign assistance but also guided the country toward the third world group,

---

<sup>24</sup> As cited in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua, eds.. Pol Pot Plan the Future, p.47; Morris, p.74

apparently at China's behest, to oppose all forms of imperialism, expansionism and hegemonism. These foreign policies were consistent with what China wanted and were likely to obtain its full support.

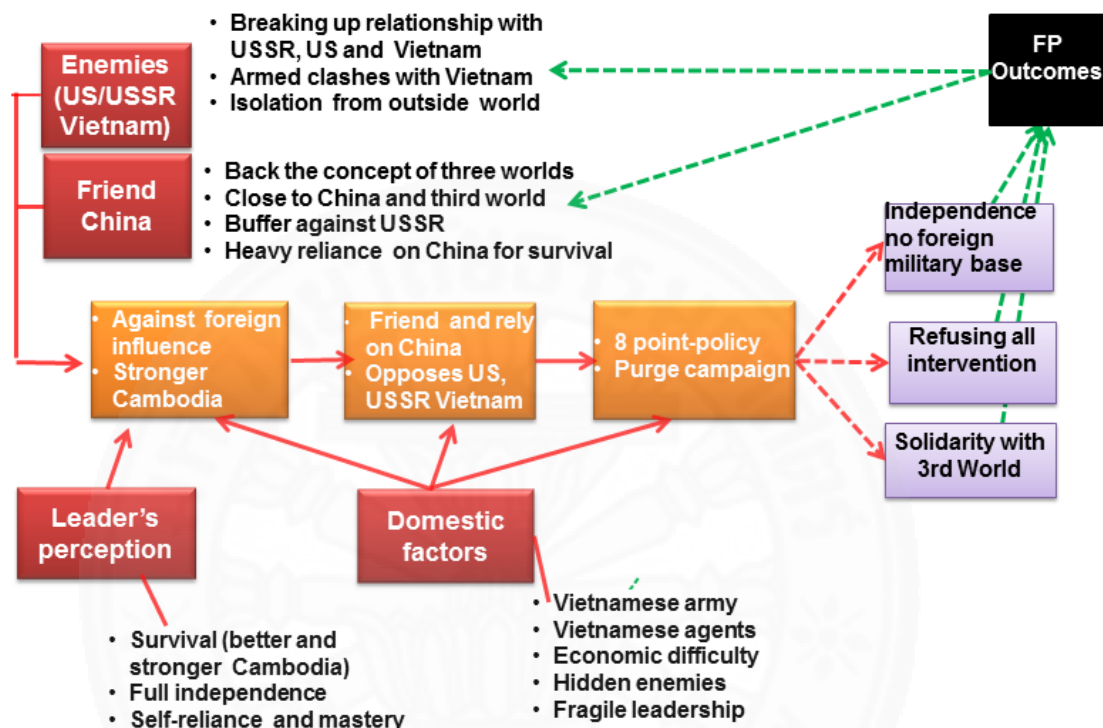


Figure 3.8 Implications of DK's foreign policy

Source: Author's own compilation, 2018

### 3.4.4 Why China Provided Tremendous aid to Pol Pot

To bring Cambodia into its orbit of influence, China strengthened connections by building military links and giving significant aid and assistance to Pol Pot's regime, ranging from food to tanks, planes and artillery (Mertha, 2014). A variety of reasons explain why China felt the need to throw significant resources to get a small state like Cambodia on its side.

**a. Building on a patron-client orbit:**

China in the late 1970s needed other small countries, especially those in the developing world, to be on its side, or function as client states, in order to contain the influence of Cold War competition between the U.S and the USSR. With more client states, China could see itself as a rising power and a match to the two superpowers (Mertha, 2014).

The purpose of this relationship was to reap political and economic benefits from the client states (Ciorciari, 2014A; Kurlantzick, 2007; Ngeow, 2015, p.139). From this perspective, the study posits that China could cultivate Pol Pot to pursue foreign policies which:

1) Opposed all forms of imperialism, aggression, expansionism and hegemonism. Further, the principles of independence and self-reliance also pushed Pol Pot to come closer to and heavily rely on China.

2) Gained full recognition of the People's Republic of China and strong support for the latter's concept of 'Three Worlds', backing Beijing against Moscow (Ciorciari, 2014b, pp. 219, 232). This support brought Cambodia into the category of third world country backed by China to struggle against imperialism and hegemonism.

3) Granted permission for only Chinese advisors and technical assistants to work in the country. In addition, on 23 January 1976, he also allowed a direct flight from Peking to Phnom Penh. This air link was believed to not only strengthen military and economic assistance but also project more Chinese influence on Cambodia (Herald-Tribune, 1976).

**b. accessing Cambodia's geographical location for expansion of influence to Southeast Asia:**

The geographical location of Cambodia was probably a good place for China to start exerting its power into South East Asia and later on to the Asia Pacific region (Marks, 2000). In this aspect, Cambodia's seaport of Sihanoukville was a perfect location China could utilize and inject maritime power into the Gulf of Thailand as well as Malacca Straits (Path et al., 2017, p. 240). Meanwhile, Port (2015, p. 598) also viewed that China needed to use Cambodia for the implementation of Maoist ideas

to the third world countries in Southeast Asia. To control Indochina, China first needed to instigate partitions among Cambodia, Lao and Vietnam.

**c. using Cambodia as a buffer against the USSR-backed Vietnam expansion:**

Another reason was that China was afraid of losing Cambodia to the Vietnamese side. Both Cambodia and Vietnam were allies during the struggle against French colonialism and a lot of Cambodian communists, who had been trained by Vietnam, had joined the Khmer Rouge. Thus, China needed to get Pol Pot on its side so that Cambodia could break away from Vietnam and be a buffer against the latter's influence and expansion in Indochina. Thus the major concern of China was to reduce the USSR and Vietnamese influence<sup>25</sup>. Ciorciari (2014b) contended that Cambodia was a crucial hedge against Vietnam (p.221). Dissolving the Vietnamese influence in Indochina would give China a chance to become a regional hegemon in the region (Chanda, 1989, p. 28). In Sophal also contended that "China, in its attempt to prevent further expansion from Soviet, needed to provide military assistance to Cambodia. The big ambition of China was to become a genuine superpower in Asia".

In conclusion, China needed Cambodia not only to mitigate threats to its national security but also to exert influence into Indochina. China did want to prevent the expansion of the USSR -backed Vietnam into Indochina. At the same time, it was also seeking a bigger role in both global and regional contexts in order to contain both the U.S and USSR through promoting the concept of three worlds. Therefore, Cambodia was probably a perfect starting point for China to realize the said two objectives.

---

<sup>25</sup> The excerpt from the inward cablegram on Cambodia-China attitude apparently from the Australian Embassy in Peking, file 265/4/5/4 dated 28 April 1975, filed in DC-Cam collection, catalogue No. D70098

### 3.5 Conclusion

To sum up, all the points discussed in this chapter, the study reiterates its preceding assumption that China is a significant factor influencing Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions. Therefore, Pol Pot's foreign policies were very similar to what China had mentioned in its Sino-US joint communiqué in 1972. Pol Pot made these policies in order to secure his regime leadership and survival.

The implementation of these foreign policies rigidly adhered to his personal concepts of friend and foe. In this respect, only China fulfilled the role as his best comrade and most reliable ally because it met all his presupposed criteria. Further, Pol Pot was personally inspired and influenced by China in five different ways: the ideas and leadership model of Chairman Mao, China's continuing support and assistance, equal treatment, non-interference and mutual respect. These elements were so important for Pol Pot to independently rule Cambodia and exterminate his hidden enemies. No other countries could provide him with this combination of practical support and ideological comfort.

In his leadership, Pol Pot pushed hard to build a better and stronger Cambodia while at the same time extending his purge campaign across the nation. However, the radical enforcement of Pol Pot's internal and external policies ended up causing the reverse of the intended impact on his regime, bringing massive loss of human resources and the split of the armed forces. The tough implementation of these policies further pushed Pol Pot to heavily rely on China for survival. Therefore, the more strictly Pol Pot complied with these fixed policies, the more likely he would push Cambodia to tilt closely to China.

China also sought to reap some benefits from Pol Pot's leadership in return for its assistance. By supplying aid to Pol Pot, China hoped not only to mitigate its national security threat imposed by the expansion of the USSR into Indochina but also to exert increased influence in this region. China stood to gain a series of additional benefits: (1) Pol Pot's foreign policies against all forms of imperialism, aggression, expansionism, hegemonism and interference into domestic affairs. (2) Pol Pot's recognition of the People's Republic of China and his strong support of the concept



of 'Three Worlds', (3) Pol Pot's decision to break with Vietnam and (4) Pol Pot's permission to allow thousands of Chinese advisers and technical assistants to work in the country. Consequently, Pol Pot could not escape from China's patron-client orbit, and his regime ended up with huge dependence the latter for security and survival.

A number of relevant questions remain unanswered. Was the collapse of Pol Pot's regime the cost he paid for his inflexible enforcement of foreign policies, purge campaign and antagonizing Vietnam? Did China use its aid to persuade Cambodia to fight against Vietnam? What were the causes of Cambodia-Vietnam war? The study will extensively examine these issues in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF CAMBODIA-VIETNAM WAR

This chapter will examine two aspects: factors leading to the major Khmer Rouge-Vietnam provocation and the connection between China's foreign assistance and the eventual Cambodia-Vietnam war. This chapter investigates whether Chinese aid, including various types of support and assistance, played a role in Cambodia's war against Vietnam. Therefore, this chapter will try to answer the last research question, "To what extent did China's foreign aid contribute to the Cambodia-Vietnam war during the Khmer Rouge era?"

"The cause of wars is to be found in the policies of states; the policies of state are determined by the values, attitudes, perceptions and judgment of a state's political decision makers, acting in an environment of domestic and international pressure and opportunities," (Morris, 1999, p. 9).

The study argues that the conflict in Indochina involved not only the two concerned countries, namely Cambodia and Vietnam, but also three major powers: the US, the USSR and China, who were competing with one another to have a share of influence over the Indochina peninsula. Even without being a proxy for the great powers, the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict would have been very difficult to resolve through negotiation or other means because of widely different perspectives of the two countries toward each other, not to mention their historic animosity. The fact that both countries had different backers, the USSR and China, who were working to contain one another so as to exert a greater share of influence in Indochina for their respective national interests and security.

According to theories of neorealism when applied to international relations, power, global uncertainty and national interests are the key points that states need consider when engaging in the international system. A state might cooperate with or even go to war against another if deemed necessary to obtain more relative power or serve national interests under a severe security threat. However, as every state engages in this dynamic, a balance of power or state alliance can emerge. In this

respect, less powerful or weak states are undoubtedly prone to aggression, foreign influence, power expansion and subversion by antagonising powerful states. Waltz claims that “those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to danger, will suffer.”<sup>26</sup> Such realist arguments have a long history. Thucydides also attached great importance to the stronger states’ decisions in interacting with other states in pursuance of power. He postulates that “as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”<sup>27</sup>

The quotes in the previous paragraph represent the stronghold generalised realist perspectives have had over theories of international relations, particularly when considering national interests and relative power in an equivocal global politics dominated by superpowers. Nevertheless, this perspective does not reflect all cases. For instance, in the case of the Khmer Rouge, many scholars and researchers still wonder why weaker and smaller Cambodia under Pol Pot dared to attack Vietnam, who had been his former patron and was, without doubt, militarily superior and more powerful. Vietnam was also backed by the USSR. Frequent skirmishes along the border and some territorial incursions gave justification for Vietnam to topple the Khmer Rouge and replace it with a friendlier regime (Kiernan, 2010; Port, 2015, p. 588). The question remains as to what pushed Pol Pot to go to war against Vietnam. To analyse the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict in depth, the study will examine the issue in three aspects: the external environment, Pol Pot's perceptions and domestic factors.

---

<sup>26</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 118.

<sup>27</sup> Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (New York: The Modern Library, 1934), book V.

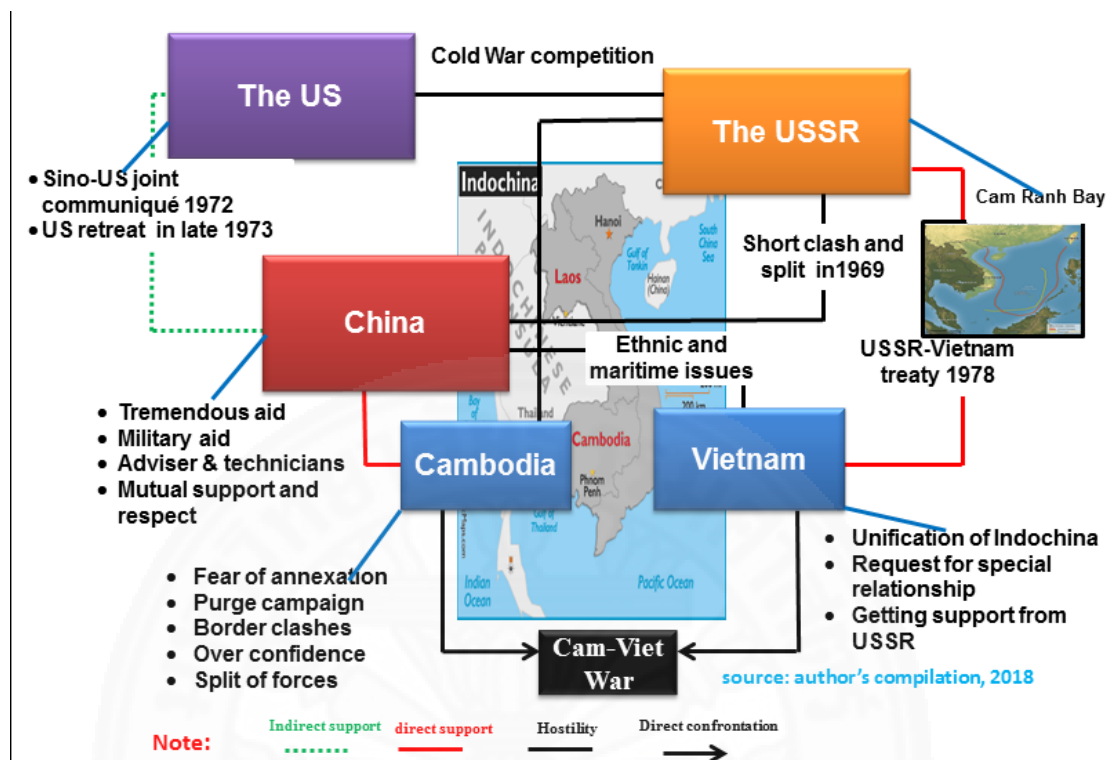


Figure 4.1 Causes of Cambodia-Vietnam war

Source: Author's compilation, 2018

#### 4.1 Analysis of the External Environment

This study considers the broader context of power competition in Indochina by comprehensively examining the direct and indirect involvement of three critical global players, namely the U.S, the USSR and China, in this region. The external environment consists of two main parts: international and regional contexts.

##### 4.1.1 The International Context

Indochina was a basis for the three contenders to further exert their respective political and material power into the Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific region (New Statesman, 1979). Therefore, the foreign policy decisions of the three do have a significant impact on the security of the small countries in Indochina. The study notes

that the three competitors were challenging one another to get a share of influence in Indochina as they injected many resources into the region since the first Indochina war in the early 1950s.

These three powers did not want to a situation which one of them allied with any of the others as the non-aligned one might feel insecure and lose its influence in the region. Thus, they stayed highly vigilant as to the others' foreign policies. For instance, the US saw the Sino-Soviet split as an opportunity to maintain its superiority since the revitalisation of their friendship would inevitably undermine US strength. China also did not want to see a US-USSR détente, while the USSR did not want to see any rapprochement between the US and China since this might lead to the exclusion of the USSR from Southeast Asia (New Statesman, 1979). How did these great powers contain each other in the Indochina? The study will look specifically at the stance of each country.

#### **4.1.1.1 U.S Policy in Indochina**

In the short-term, the US did not want to inject any more resources into Indochina region but still needed to antagonise the USSR to prevent the spread of communist influence into Southeast Asia while at the same time maintaining its influence in the region. Thus, the US was faced with a dilemma in having to reduce its commitment to Indochina, but at the same time still balance against the USSR.

After the bitter experience and tremendous loss of resources including thousands of lives in the prolonged Vietnam War in Indochina, the U.S intended to withdraw but needed to do something in order to maintain the balance of power against its biggest Cold War rival before the retreat. US President Gerald Ford, during his meeting with Indonesian President Suharto on December 1975 in Jakarta, said that “despite the severe setback of Vietnam [...], the United States intends to continue a strong interest in and influence in the Pacific, Southeast Asia and Asia. As a whole, we hope to expand this influence” (Kieman, 2002, p.487).

Grasping the opportunity afforded by the split in the relationship between the USSR and China, who also perceived the Soviet as its prime enemy, the US needed China to replace it in the Indochina conflict. To this end, the

US sought to normalise diplomatic relations with China and at the same time weakening Soviet influence and undermine relationship among Communist powers. At this time, the US tried to minimise the involvement of either the USSR or China in the region and to avoid conflict that might cause the global and regional insecurity and instability (Porter, 1982, p. 6). While visiting China in 1975, President Ford also made it clear that “we are opposed to the expansion of any nation or combination of nations. This statement was aimed not at China but its rivals”.

In this aspect, the study posits that the US strategy to retreat from competition in Indochina brought three benefits: revitalising diplomatic friendship with China, emasculating communist powers by letting China play a role in Indochina to contain both the Soviets and Vietnam and restoring its global image. The U.S could escape from severe criticism at home and abroad over its aerial bombing of Cambodia between 1969 and 1973 when Nixon had ordered a secret bombing campaign as part of the Vietnam War into Cambodian territory, killing over 100,000 Cambodian peasants (Kiernan, 2002, p. 485; Etcheson, 1984, p. 89).

Following its troop withdrawal, the US wanted to see Cambodia independent of North Vietnam and on the side of China. US Secretary of State Kissinger mentioned in the bilateral meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai Chunhawan dated November 26, 1975, that “we would like Cambodia to be independent as a counterweight to North Vietnam. We do not mind Chinese influence in Cambodia to balance North Vietnam. [...] We would prefer to have Laos and Cambodia align with China rather than North Vietnam. We would try to encourage this.” (US Department of State, 1975)<sup>28</sup>. In a separate occasion, while meeting with Indonesian, President Suharto on December 1975 in Jakarta, Kissinger also mentioned that despite the genocide in Cambodia, the U.S, China and Thailand all supported the independence of the Khmer Rouge regime for the geopolitical reasons, and the U.S did not discourage China and Thailand to tilt to Cambodia (Kiernan, 2002, p.487). These

---

<sup>28</sup>The U.S releases this declassified document after keeping confidential for 30 years

cases precisely revealed the US hidden intention in supporting China to get Laos and Cambodia on its side to contain North Vietnam.

#### **4.1.1.2 USSR Policy in Indochina**

The study views that after Europe, the Asia-Pacific region was the second most important strategic interest of the USSR given its connection between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. This region allowed the USSR to cement its strategy to expand its encirclement policy on an arch stretching from Northeast Africa, the Middle East, to Southeast Asia. To have a firm foundation in the region, it needed to establish overseas military bases for its air and naval forces operation (Ting Wai, 1987). Since having no good relations with any of the significant powers, namely the U.S, China and Japan, the USSR saw the Indochina peninsula as its important stronghold for exerting power into Southeast Asia and Asia.

In Indochina, only the Cam Ranh Bay of Vietnam was the most suitable place to serve this purpose, since it could be used as ‘the base for communication, intelligence gathering, electronic surveillance and logistics supplies for actions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific to challenge with the U.S in Asia’ (Ting Wai, 1987). It was believed that Cam Ranh Bay was a project of USSR power without the risk of Sino-Soviet or Soviet-American war (Indochina Issue, 1985, p. 2,6). Therefore, Cam Ranh Bay was the target of the USSR to realise its ambition of containing the U.S in Asia.

To access this strategic area, it needed to actively support Vietnam economically, technically and militarily. Thus, the USSR had to subsidise Vietnam, and finally, both countries reached a treaty on economic cooperation and mutual assistance in late 1978. The treaty was seemingly another key factor complicating security issues in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

When the USSR became interested in Indochina by supporting Vietnam with access to its strategic sea bases, the Indochina conflict became a security issue of China as well. China seemingly perceived this motive of the USSR-Vietnam treaty as the USSR's global expansion strategy and encirclement policy targeting not only China and entire Asia. For instance, Chinese Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-ping stressed that this treaty was not only directed at China but also Asia-Pacific region and the

world because it was part of the Soviet global strategy in Asia to expand hegemonic acts of both Vietnam and the USSR (Peking Review, 1978b, p. 24). Therefore, China needed to take some concrete measures to alleviate its security concerns.

#### **4.1.2 The Regional Context**

At the regional level of Indochina, the study focuses explicitly on two countries, namely China and Vietnam, who have been playing a significant role in the region. In this regard, it will explore the intentions and relations of both countries in taking part in Indochina. The study views that these two countries were also challenging one another to exert influence in the region. Vietnam wanted to reunite all three countries under the Vietnamese communist party, whereas China insisted on separating the three because it saw a real danger to its national security if the USSR-backed Vietnam conquered the whole region.

##### **4.1.2.1 China's Policy in Indochina**

China, between 1963 and 1969, perceived both the U.S and the USSR as its most significant enemies. However, in the aftermath of the USSR invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and following the latter's threat to smash its nuclear weapons installation in 1969, China realised that the USSR was an imminent threat. In this regard, China perceived the Soviets as its most significant security adversary with the sceptical view that they were trying to implement their encirclement policy undermining China's national security, (Khoo, 2010, pp. 231–232). Thus, China applied a rapprochement policy toward the U.S to mitigate this hazard (Morris, 1999, p. 87; Segal, 1980).

In Sophal also argued that the main threat to China was the USSR because the latter was dishonest in their relationship. He raised the example of the Korean War between 1950 and 1953. Initially, both countries agreed to join the war against the U.S. However, when the war intensified, the USSR did not take part in the fighting, neither did it deploy troops to help China. Moreover, when the UN Security Council held a meeting to decide on the Korean peninsula issue, the Soviet was absent. Thus, the UN decided to send troops to intervene in the war. As a consequence, nearly one million Chinese troops died in the war. He further stressed that the USSR never



wanted to see China as a great power because China's rise might affect its influence. The Korean War undermined China's strength.

Perceiving the USSR as their eminent rivalry, both China and the U.S ultimately reached an agreement on the revitalisation of the bilateral relationship in 1972. It was called China-U.S Joint Communiqué made on 27 February 1972 in Shanghai between U.S President Richard Nixon and Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. Below are some significant excerpts from the whole text<sup>29</sup>.

From the U.S side: The United States supports individual freedom and social progress for all the peoples of the world, free of outside pressure or intervention. [...]. The peoples of Indochina should be allowed to determine their destiny without outside intervention.[...] The United States envisages the ultimate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from the region consistent with the aim of self-determination for each country of Indochina.

From the Chinese side: Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance. Countries want independence, nations want liberation, and the people want a revolution. [...]. China firmly supports the struggles of all the oppressed people and nations for freedom and liberation. [...] The people of all countries have the right to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of their own countries and to oppose foreign aggression, interference, control and subversion. All foreign troops should be withdrawn to their own countries [...] (U.S-China Joint Communiqué, 1972). For the full text, see Appendix D.

Based on the said commitment, both sides incorporated these principles into their international relations by working towards the normalisation of their mutual relationship and the risk mitigation of international military conflict. Both sides also agreed not to seek hegemony while opposing any effort or attempt by any country to establish hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.

This joint communiqué demonstrated that both China and the US would work together toward the normalisation of mutual relationship and

---

<sup>29</sup> Pecking Review published the full text of this joint agreement on March 03, 1972

attach great importance to the separate independence of individual state in Indochina so that they could determine their own destiny. The U.S would withdraw its troops and support from Indochina, whereas China would decisively back the struggle for freedom and liberation of individual states from a foreign aggressor, and oppose any sanctuary of foreign troops in another country. At the same time, both parties also pledged not to seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.

Concerning this interpretation, the study speculates that China would play a key role in Indochina as a US successor following the latter's retreat. Both parties were likely to contain USSR influence in this region, in particular, and Asia-Pacific, in general. Concerning the issue of the struggle against imperialism in Indochina, China, in 1972, insisted on supporting the oppressed states for national salvation, reiterating its firm stance that “we do not have the right to interfere with their sovereignty, but the obligation to support Cambodia, Lao and Vietnam to resist” (Julio, 2000).

In 1970, Chairman Mao tried to convince all ‘oppressed’ countries to contain both the US and USSR by mainstreaming his belief in the power of human factors in defeating external oppression so long as continued to resist. He pointed out that “weak countries could defeat strong countries, and small countries could beat a large state. When people of small states dare to fight, dare to pick up the weapons, they surely would defeat the invasion of the large states. This is a historical law.” (Julio, 2000). Thus, he intended to inspire all oppressed countries in Indochina specifically, in Southeast Asia, in general, and in the world, at large, to invigorate the struggle against imperialism and expansionism, which were, of course, imposed by both the US and USSR.

For Indochina, China did not want to see Vietnam as its next-door rising power while the Soviet-Vietnam relationship was further strengthened. As Vietnam moved closer to the Soviet Union, China applied a theory of ‘principal enemy’ emphasising that ‘the friend of my enemy is my enemy’. Further, China was also having a difficult relationship with Vietnam because of ethnic tensions and border disputes. China itself feared that the end of the Indochina war would result in Vietnamese dominance in all the former French colonies, with a subsequent increase in USSR

influence (Ta Kung Pao, 1975). It, in this regard, China needed Cambodia to prevent the USSR expansion into the whole of Indochina. U.S Secretary of State Kissinger also observed that “the Chinese want to use Cambodia to balance off Vietnam” (Kieman, 2002, p.487). Only Cambodia, among the three countries in this region, did not yet get influence from the USSR. Thus, this was an opportunity for China to cultivate its strategic interests in Cambodia.

#### 4.1.2.2 Vietnam’s Policy in Indochina

After the unification of North and South Vietnam in 1975 and removal of US troops from the Indochinese peninsula, Vietnam continued in its intention to unite Cambodia and Laos under the communist party line. In June 1976, Le Daun stated in the National Assembly that solidarity and fraternal friendship with Laos and Cambodia provided ‘the primary and basic content of our foreign policy’ and later on appealed for the ‘special relationship with Cambodian.’<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh further echoed this stance and emphasised the great importance of unity among the three countries in Indochina. He stressed that “we attach great importance to the solidarity between the three countries: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia [...]. In the new period, we will do all we can to safeguard and develop this special relationship between the Vietnamese people and the Lao and Cambodian peoples,” (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, p. 119).

In stressing unity and fraternal friendship, Vietnam proposed a special relationship, based on mutual assistance, with Cambodia and Laos. This request was to range across fields among the three countries: compliance with equality, mutual respect, independence and sovereignty (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995). Vietnam had been a founder of the communist movement in Indochina in 1930 and the communist parties of all three countries struggle jointly to expel French colonists during the first Indochina war. The US stated in its 1978 report that ‘the Vietnamese communists long have regarded a Federation of Indochina as the proper ultimate political configuration for the peninsula. Of necessity, it would require Cambodian and

---

<sup>30</sup>cited by William J. Duiker in Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon, (Ohio: The University of Ohio, Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asia, No. 56A, 1989).

Laotian acquiescence, or at least for them to find rulers in two countries who are amenable to the idea. (US Report, 1978, p. 17). Laos had already established a firm friendship with Vietnam and was increasingly under its military influence. Nonetheless, this proposal was rejected by Pol Pot, fearing Vietnamese dominance.

Following its unification, Vietnam further continued to strengthen its military force. In 1978, it recruited about 400,000 troops and recalled some 200,000 ex-soldiers. The Vietnamese army reached a strength of 1.5 million. Vietnam dispatched 50,000 troops to Laos and 20,000 troops in Cambodia. It also challenged the sovereignty of the Xisha and Nansha (Paracel and Spratly) islands in the South China Sea with China. It refused to grant Vietnamese citizenship to ethnic Chinese (Hoa) in South Vietnam. Consequently, about 200,000 Chinese nationals were forced to leave the country. In addition, Vietnam was further alienated by the normalisation of friendship between China and the US. To reduce the mounting threat from China, Vietnam came closer to the USSR for protection and economic support (Porter, 1982, p. 3; The Call, 1979). Both sides ultimately formed a treaty on economic cooperation and mutual assistance in 1978.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Pol Pot's Perception of Cambodia-Vietnam Conflicts**

This study will explore the factors leading to the increased tensions and final escalation of war between Cambodia and Vietnam by comprehensively examining Pol Pot's perceptions of Vietnam as it is so important to understand the said conflicts. Unresolved border disputes contributed to the tension and escalation of Cambodia-Vietnam which added to Pol Pot's mistrust and suspicion of Vietnamese intentions in Indochina. The key factors contributing to the aggravation are as follows: historical context and ethnic tension, unresolved border disputes and feeling of mistrust toward negotiation, overconfidence and miscalculation of Vietnamese strength as well as the robust implementation of Pol Pot's policies which causes the split among Khmer Rouge itself.

Pol Pot perceived Vietnam as a greedy aggressor whose ultimate aim, after expanding its influence into Cambodia, was to annex it and make it part of an Indochina Federation. This argument was based on the factors examined below.

#### 4.2.1 Historical Context and Ethnic Tension

Pol Pot seemingly regarded Vietnam as a greedy enemy whose aim was to conquer Cambodia and gradually turn all Cambodians into a minority in their own land. In his interview with a Yugoslavia journalist on March 17, 1978, Pol Pot pointed out that Vietnam had long intended to incorporate Cambodia into its Indochina Federation and had dispatched more and more Vietnamese people to settle inside Cambodia year by year. He emphasised that “in 30 years or more, the people of Kampuchea would become a national minority. That is very clear.” (Department of Press and Information Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DK, 1978).

Further, ethnic tension was also important in this conflict. Pol Pot stated that “the friendship and solidarity between the revolutions and peoples of our two countries have not only had a political reason but also been built on very profound sentiments”<sup>31</sup> (Pol Pot, 1976). As portrayed in history, both Cambodia and Vietnamese nationals have a historic animosity and often experience hostility and hatred toward one another (US Report, 1978, p. 3). Youk Chhang also mentioned the importance of history in the conflict. He contended that “as history has shown, Cambodia is always a victim of Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge felt victimised by Vietnam; so they made history. You killed us, and I killed you back. Vietnam also knew about Cambodia's feeling toward it”.

Concerning the friendship between the two countries, Pol Pot never saw any genuine commitment from the Vietnamese side but only the attempt to influence Cambodia. He stated that “the Vietnamese, from 1965 and 1975, asked for refuge on Cambodian land using friendship to form an independent party inside the country. They then attempted to break up the CPK Central Committee and installed

---

<sup>31</sup> Pol Pot gave a rare interview to Vietnam News Agency on 20 July 1976 in Phnom Penh on the bilateral relations between Vietnam and Cambodia

their favoured elements [...] From 1975 to 1977, they interfered in our internal affairs and attempted to create coups again and again ...” (Searching for the Truth, 2001). Further, Khmer Rouge accused Vietnam of an attempt to take control of the Eastern Zone then separate it from Cambodia and transform it into a new pawn of Vietnam (Ministry of Propaganda and Information of Democratic Kampuchea, 1978, p. 1).

#### **4.2.2 Overconfidence and Miscalculation of Vietnamese Strength**

Pol Pot believed that the Cambodian army could defeat the Vietnamese army. Having defeated the biggest military power in the world from 1970 to 1975 with little assistance from outside, Pol Pot viewed that Cambodia's political force was more powerful than Vietnam's (Porter, 1982, p. 6). He asserted that the Cambodian army had defeated the Vietnamese expansionists several times already. If Vietnam continued to encroach into Cambodia, it would be defeated militarily, politically, economically and financially because Vietnam needed to spend a lot of economic and financial means to prolong the war with Cambodia while its country and people were lacking food and did not have enough resources to fight for a long period of time. Moreover, it would receive the most forceful reaction and condemnation from the world, the third world in particular. Vietnam would also lose economic aid and support as a consequence of its aggression against Cambodia (Porter, 1982, p. 6; US Report, 1978, p. 10). Pol Pot assumed that Vietnam was facing severe difficulties ranging from lack of effectiveness in its administration to starvation (Pol Pot, 1978c).

On May 10, 1978, in a Khmer Rouge public propaganda radio broadcast, Pol Pot stated his vision for the defeat of Vietnam. He claimed that to win over Vietnam, one KR troop needed to kill 30 Vietnamese. Thus, to completely defeat the enemy, KR needed only two million troops to conquer 60 million Vietnamese (Boraden, 2013, p. 78; Thayer, 2012).

### 4.3 Analysis of Domestic Factors

The study notes two crucial factors leading to the large-scale war between Cambodia and Vietnam; they included the on-going border disputes and the internal split of Khmer Rouge forces. As a result, the number of incidents of armed clashes along the borders and in nearby provinces between Cambodia and Vietnam increased considerably in the period from 1975 to 1978. According to a Vietnamese source, the number of incidents soared from 174 in 1975 to 4,820 times in 1978<sup>32</sup>.

Table 4.1

*Estimated number of Cambodia-Vietnam armed clashes, 1975-1978*

| Year | Armed clashes in number |
|------|-------------------------|
| 1975 | 174                     |
| 1976 | 254                     |
| 1977 | 1,150                   |
| 1978 | 4,820                   |

Source: Path et al., 2017, p. 18

In reference to the increasing number of armed clashes between the two countries, the US expressed its view that “both Cambodia and Vietnam spoke of sacred borders and their commitment not to be dominated. Both claimed they were not waging war. The Cambodian mentioned about survival, only resisting aggression, whereas the Vietnamese referred to settle the issues through the diplomatic solution. Both affirmed they were untarnished by aggressive ambition and only wanted to have a friendship with the other.” (1978, p. 10). Meanwhile, Path Kosal argued that both parties had a different perspective toward the conflict. Khmer Rouge considered it as

---

<sup>32</sup> The numbers are taken from the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense, 2010, p. 26 by Path et al., 2017, p. 18

a preventive war against Vietnam, whereas the latter regarded it as China's strategy to weaken the Vietnamese strength (Path et al., 2017, p. 18).

Concerning the different claims by both parties, Youk Chhang explained the incidents through the legal means: “In war crime, someone must declare war and wage war to the other and also killed prisoners of war. Declaring war must be done by a state making a war declaration. However, the conflict between Vietnam and Khmer Rouge was unclear; Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot made a radio speech of killing Vietnamese. Each Khmer Rouge soldier had to kill 17 Vietnamese to win the war. However, it was not a war declaration. On the Vietnamese side, there was no such of speech or war declaration. So, by law, the Khmer Rouge started; Vietnam said that it fought back for its own defence. Through legal implication, there was no war declaration except Pol Pot's speech on the radio. Vietnam never declared the war, but at the ground, they (Cambodia and Vietnam) fought each other and killed each other”.

The unresolved border dispute, unclear demarcation of the border frontier and the feeling of mistrust vis-a-vis any proposed negotiation are also the key factors leading to the full-scale conflict between the two countries. Pol Pot perceived the mounting figure of armed incidences between the two countries as the Vietnamese strategy of ‘lighting attack, lighting victory’ to win over Cambodia (Pol Pot, 1978c). Pol Pot stated his precise stance of defending Cambodia from any foreign provocation, interference, subversion and espionage activities with zero tolerance (Peking Review, 1977, pp. 23–30). He demanded that Vietnamese troops be withdrawn from Cambodia before any negotiations started (The New York Times, 1978). Further, he claimed on January 05, 1979, just a few days before his regime collapse, that “Cambodia’s nation and people resolutely do not accept to kneel down in front of the Vietnamese army” (Pol Pot, 1979).

Pol Pot also rejected any negotiation to settle the border dispute initiated by Vietnam as he deemed it as a pretext to fool the world and a new lie to conceal the Vietnamese invasion. He underlined that “whatever methods they use, we understand all. Our Kampuchean people and brave military forces have identified the Vietnamese aggression, territorial expansion and tactics for dozens of years” (Searching for the Truth, 2001). Khmer Rouge cadre Roath stationed at Cambodia-Laos border



sent a telegram to Pol Pot reporting that “nowadays, Vietnam is playing a trick to cheat international community on the matter of peace talks with Cambodia. Vietnam is still using politics, the strategy of Indo-Chinese Union and carrying on all aspects of its activities on Cambodia. So, both the previous and recent proposals of Vietnam show that Vietnam is not honest with Cambodia” (KR Telegram, 1978).

It should be noted that Vietnam, on February 05, 1978, proposed a three-point plan to address the border conflict with Cambodia: an instant halt of military operations along the border, a call for immediate meetings to reach a resolution based on mutual respect of independence, sovereignty and territory as well as the joint agreement made by the two parties for international guarantee and supervision<sup>33</sup>. Nonetheless, this proposal was rejected by Pol Pot, who believed that it was a Vietnamese manoeuvre to conceal its means of annexing Kampuchea within a definite period (Ministry of Propaganda and Information of Democratic Kampuchea, 1978, p. 3).

The study also notes that the key issue in the border dispute was the discrepancy in the existing border recognition of both parties. This discrepancy led to unsuccessful sequential negotiations. For instance, after the end of the Vietnam-US war, Vietnam demanded territory that had previously been agreed upon by all parties with the Cambodian side. This recognition had been formalised in 1966 and 1967 in a communiqué signed by both the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (The Call, 1979). Pol Pot stressed that “during the negotiation, Vietnam rejected the border that it had recognised in 1966 and 1967 because it said that at that time it needed to fight against the U.S imperialists. Further Vietnam has proposed a new border demarcation, cutting off a great part of our territorial border. For us, it is expansionism and annexationism” (Department of Press and Information Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DK, 1978).

Vietnamese General Tran Van Tra also recognised the tensions caused by the presence of Vietnamese troops inside Cambodia. He observed that “not long after the Vietnamese increased their military presence in Cambodia, there were more and

---

<sup>33</sup>The excerpt from Vietnamese comment on Pol Pot's interview dated 14 April 1978 from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D30276

more armed incidents between the two communist allies. It was reported to the VWP Central Committee in Hanoi by military commanders in the fields, but the central committee wanted to reconcile differences with CPK friends in order to concentrate all our forces in the liberation of the south. In other words, because the war effort in southern Vietnam was the order-of-the-day, the Vietnamese Politburo put these severe problems with the CPK 'on hold'<sup>34</sup> (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, pp. 110–113).

However, concerning the border dispute, Pol Pot was believed to use force rather than negotiation to reclaim the territory lost. Cambodian scholar In Sophal expressed the view that Pol Pot fought against Vietnam to reoccupy some land lost to Vietnam such as Koh Trol which Pol Pot believed Vietnam took from Cambodia as well as other contested areas along the border which were already occupied by Vietnam. He said that Pol Pot forces started attacking the Vietnamese force first until being able to control Koh Trol island for two weeks and then further went to Vietnamese territory about 2 Km from the border. Similarly, Path Kosal stressed that the causes of break-up relationship between Khmer Rouge and Vietnam were the Khmer Rouge's use of its alliance with China to take over territory from Vietnam by force, its anti-Vietnam ideology, and military attacks into Vietnam and killing of Vietnamese civilians. Thus, border discrepancy might be a major cause of tension and war escalation between the two countries.

Further, the conflict might also be a consequence of the split of Khmer Rouge forces because of its ultra-extreme internal measures. Youk Chhang stated that “there was a split of Khmer Rouge between Pro-Vietnam and Pro-China. They were split between China and Vietnam, so they became weak; they broke up among themselves. The population was small, so they were vulnerable. Thus, they needed to rely on either China or Vietnam”. He also underlined that the series of internal conflicts led to the split between their movement and defection of some Khmer Rouge

---

<sup>34</sup> According to the interview between Thomas Engeleber's interview with Tran Van Tra, 15 August 1989, Ho Chi Minh City as cited by Engelbert & Goscha, *Falling out of Touch*, 1995, pp. 110–113.

troops to Vietnam. Those troops came back with the Vietnamese troops to overthrow the KR regime.

#### 4.4 Examination of the Involvement of Chinese aid in the Cambodia-Vietnam Conflict

In this section, the study assesses the involvement of Chinese aid in the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict. It will explore the extent that the aid contributed to the escalation of the war. Through in-depth interviews with four Cambodian scholars who are researchers and specialists in the Khmer Rouge history and based on the review of numerous Khmer Rouge books, as well as the primary and secondary data collected, the study has found no concrete evidence proving that China's aid was directly involved in the conflict. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the aid was insignificant.

The study has noted that China showed sustained support for Pol Pot's struggle for independence, and pledged to be on his side while Cambodia had a conflict with Vietnam. For instance, in November 1973, Ing Sary reported that Zhou Enlai pledged China's continuing support to the CPK.<sup>35</sup> According to Ing Sary, Zhou Enlai told him that "if Cambodia fights to the end, then China will also support you to the end. Whether it is fighting or negotiating, we will resolutely support the Cambodian party's decision. However, one must take the initiative. [...] One should not be over eager to negotiate as one has not yet reached the moment to introduce a policy of simultaneous fighting and negotiating". Further, Zhou Enlai advised Ing Sary to go ahead with the conflict before any negotiation was reached (Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, pp. 110–113).

Pol Pot received an additional commitment of support for his struggle for independence from China in late 1978. At the banquet welcoming the Chinese delegation to Phnom Penh, Chinese Vice Chairman Wang Tunghsing confirmed strong

---

<sup>35</sup>, the meeting between Ing Sary and Vietnamese counterpart Le Duc Tho in November 1973 in Vietnam as cited by Engelbert & Goscha, 1995, pp. 110–113.

support for Cambodia's struggle for the defence of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity (Peking Review, 1978a, p. 4).

However, when the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict escalated, Pol Pot's request for more military aid and intervention from China was denied. To explain this rejection, Youk Chhang pointed out that "some scholars maintain that China wanted to teach the Khmer Rouge a lesson, so it delayed the assistance. China was supposed to supply their emergency assistance immediately because its leaders knew that the Khmer Rouge was under attack by Vietnam. [...] Moreover, a lot of Khmer Rouge defected in 1977. This defection prompted China to rethink about the relationship with KR".

China did provide military supplies to the Khmer Rouge quite frequently but not in vast quantities. Youk Chhang pointed out that Khmer Rouge had some military supplies but minimal supplies. He said that "China was also poor, so it had to think about its own resources and population. Thus, the supply was not sufficient at that time". In May 1978 during the Cambodia military exhibition, all the sophisticated weaponry shown were from China (US Report, 1978, p.11).

When asked about the extent of Chinese aid to the Cambodia-Vietnam aggression, Cambodian scholars share a range of views. In Sophal contended that the aid provided to Khmer Rouge was used to protect Cambodia from Vietnamese influence, rather than to attack. China could not provide heavy weapons to the Khmer Rouge at the time because China was still poor and its economy had declined while supporting Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He added that "China's provision of military assistance was to protect Cambodia from Vietnamese expansion. China also feared Soviet power. That is why the aid was limited. If Pol Pot did not comply with China's policies, China would cut off the aid. The aid aimed at preventing the spread of Soviet-backed communism into Cambodia because the aid was mainly focused on weaponry with little attention to agriculture". He further stressed that the weapons from China were used to contain Vietnam. Khmer Rouge needed more weapons because it extended the military force.

Path Kosal posited that Chinese aid was critical to the Khmer Rouge, without which they could not have mounted a sustained offensive against a powerful

Vietnamese army. However, he stressed that “the Khmer Rouge proved to be an uneasy client state of China, but the alliance served China's broader strategic containment of Vietnam after the Vietnamese unification in 1975. The Khmer Rouge provocation of war with the Vietnamese against China's advice for restraint led to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge was just a pawn in China's chessboard”.

Youk Chhang took a slightly different view, suggesting that the significant factor was not China's military supply but the Khmer Rouge's aspiration for war. He stressed that “the Khmer Rouge was all about the military; they won the war through the gun, not negotiation; military power was the strategy of the Khmer Rouge to take over the country and also to sustain peace. Thus, it was not inspired by China's supply, but their own inspiration for war. They sought peace and security through war. The Khmer Rouge did not expect that the conflict with Vietnam happened so soon. It was very quick. The Khmer Rouge was not well prepared, but Vietnam was very strategic; they knew how to fight, to live, to survive”.

In reference to the border dispute, there were also some controversial views from Vietnam and China. Vietnam accused China of using Cambodia to impair its strength, whereas China deemed Vietnam as an antagonist to control Indochina. Vietnam assumed that the border war was a deliberate Chinese tactic aimed at sapping Vietnam's economic strength (Porter, 1982, p. 6). In this regard, Vietnam perceived a series of attacks by Khmer Rouge against it as part of China's strategy to depreciate Vietnam and then start spreading influence over Indochina (Path et al., 2017, p. 18). In October 1978, when asked why Kampuchea with 5-6 million population dared to attack Vietnam with over 50 million population, Nguyen Co Thach, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, responded by asking, “Why would Israel, with a population of 3 million, dare to invade Egypt with a population of over 35 million? Because the Khmer Rouge are assured they have 800 million behind them as Israel has the might of the United States to rely on” (Etcheson, 1984, pp. 187–188).

However, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Chang Hai-Feng in 1978 mentioned that Vietnam had planned long ago to set up a greater Indochina federation. After putting Laos under its military occupation, Vietnam intended to advance its next step

of annexing Cambodia. He stressed that “China supported Kampuchea because it was consistent with Chinese foreign policy to resist aggression”<sup>36</sup>. To settle the dispute, China preferred the negotiation option from the principle of peaceful coexistence. As the situation worsened, China was cautious of its course of action, applying moderate rather than tougher measures against Vietnam since China assumed that the latter might move faster to the USSR if the harsher measures were imposed against it (The New York Times, 1978).

Moreover, the US thought China was unlikely to encourage Cambodia to antagonise Vietnam: “China helps Cambodia partly because she considered the Cambodian cause correct. China says the French unfairly fixed the boundaries at Cambodian's expense. Because of her international duties to socialist nations, Cambodian is a victim of aggression. China says Cambodian will eventually win because moral factors always prevail over material factors” (US report on Vietnam-Cambodia conflict, 1978, p.16).

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In summary, all the points discussed in this chapter suggest that the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict was not only caused by two conflicting countries having different perspectives towards each other, but also the direct and indirect involvement of the three great powers in supporting different sides. Both countries had different backers, the USSR and China, who also contained one another to exert a share of influence in Indochina for their respective national interests and security.

Therefore, the foreign policy and decisions of the three powers did have a high impact on the security of the small countries in the Indochina. Some of the important events were the split in Sino-Soviet relations in 1969, the Sino-U.S joint communiqué of 1972 and the USSR-Vietnam treaty of cooperation in 1978. These

---

<sup>36</sup> The excerpt from the inward cablegram on China: Some View on Indochina apparently from the Australian Embassy in Peking dated 26 September 1978, filed in DC-Cam collection, catalogue No. D70231

events paved the way for the big communist countries to compete with one another for a share of regional influence in the absence of the US in Indochina.

For Pol Pot's perception of the domestic situation, the study has uncovered some key factors contributing to this conflict. The most significant of these are Pol Pot's conception of the historical context and ethnic issues, the unresolved border dispute and feeling of mistrust toward negotiation as well as Pol Pot's overconfidence and strict policy enforcement.

For the extent of China's foreign aid contributing to the Cambodia-Vietnam war, the study would like to conclude that the military aid provided to Pol Pot was absolutely crucial for the regime to survive. However, the military supplies were only used for protection not for invasion. China provided tremendous military supplies to Pol Pot in order to keep him in power and allow him to remove his internal and external rivalries. Most of all, it did not want to lose Cambodia to Vietnam.

However, due to the strong support from China in the form of military and political aspect, Pol Pot felt more motivated and courageous to contain Vietnam by force. This huge support apparently inspired his leadership perception, which was fuelled by extreme nationalism and hatred against Vietnamese ethnicity, to lead the country independently and to get rid of Vietnamese influence. In this sense, Pol Pot strongly depended on the Chinese aid to fiercely antagonize Vietnam. With strong confidence in China's support for his struggle for independence, Pol Pot continued to countervail Vietnam, ignoring any negotiation proposed by the latter which he believed a fake one. Without China's genuine and continued support, Pol Pot could not have any resources to wage a war against Vietnam. Therefore, the Chinese aid and its long-term pledged support extended to Pol Pot was so significant for his regime to contain Vietnam. Even though there was no sign from China to antagonize Vietnam, Pol Pot's aspiration for war against Vietnam was seemingly fuelled by China's long term commitment of support and his radical nationalism to build the country out of foreign influence specially to escape from the Vietnamese influence in annexing Cambodia to the Indochina federation led by Vietnam.





## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This last chapter will synthesise and summarise the key points discussed in the previous chapters, particularly chapters 3 and 4, and make a conclusion after revisiting the original hypothesis. This chapter will also identify the study limitations to benefit future research on this issue. The findings from the previous two chapters are based on the application of neo-classical realism theory, which chiefly centres on three crucial variables: external environment, leader's perception and domestic issues. The study has applied this theory by examining and interpreting the motives behind Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions and the policy outcomes as well as the causes of the Cambodia-Vietnam war and the involvement of China's aid in the conflict.

#### 5.1 Key Findings from the Two Case Studies

For case study one, the study reaffirms that China is a significant factor influencing Pol Pot's foreign policy decisions. To obtain full support, as well as military and economic assistance, from China, Pol Pot needed to form foreign policies that were compatible with China's aims and desires. Hence, his foreign policies were very similar to those specified by China in its Sino-US joint communiqué in 1972. Pol Pot implemented these policies in order to secure his leadership of the regime and guarantee his survival.

In his endeavour to rebuild Cambodia to restore the past glories of the Angkor era, Pol Pot was personally inspired and influenced by China in five different ways. These influences include his embrace of the ideas and leadership model of Chairman Mao, China's continuing support and assistance, and the principles of equal treatment, non-interference and mutual respect. These elements were crucial for Pol Pot to rule Cambodia independently, but also allowed him to exterminate his hidden enemies to secure his leadership. No other country but China could provide him with these benefits.

However, while simultaneously applying the unbendable foreign policies of self-reliance and independence, Pol Pot could not survive without China's strong support. Therefore, the more strictly he complied with those policies, the more heavily his regime relied on China.

Pol Pot also needed China's support to contain the Vietnamese expansion in Indochina and to deal with his alleged concealed enemies. The study notes that the more aid provided to Pol Pot, the more purges he carried out to eliminate his enemies. This radical movement and purge campaign only served as a more severe distraction to country's development and led to an even heavier reliance on China for survival.

China also sought to reap some benefits from Pol Pot's leadership in return for its assistance. Giving large amounts of aid to Pol Pot, China also needed Cambodia not only to mitigate its national security threat imposed by the expansion of the USSR into Indochina but also to exert influence in this region and later in Asia. From the Pol Pot regime, China cultivated at least four favours from Pol Pot: 1) :foreign policies to oppose all forms of imperialism, aggression, expansionism, intervention, and hegemonism (the principles of independence and self-reliance also pushed Pol Pot closer to China); (2) recognition and massive support for China's concept of the three worlds, (3) the decision to distance Cambodia from Vietnam; and (4) permission to allow thousands of Chinese advisers and technical assistants to work in the country. These factors meant that Pol Pot could not escape from China. Though unhappy with Pol Pot's ferociousness, China was unlikely to stop aid because it also wanted Pol Pot's regime to be independent of Vietnamese influence. Otherwise, the whole region would be controlled by Vietnam, leaving no place for China, who was competing for a share of influence in the region.

In short, both Pol Pot and China needed each other in order to attain their foreign policy objectives. Pol Pot was seeking full independence from all kinds of interferences, self-reliance and self-mastery. Meanwhile, China granted massive levels of foreign aid to Pol Pot for three benefits: to get him on its side, to mitigate the dire security threat from the USSR's encirclement policy, as well as to grasp the chance for influence in the Indochina peninsula by using Cambodia as a foundation for further

expansion into other suppressed countries in a China-led third world. However, Pol Pot limited himself from seeking external assistance while he obstinately obeyed his seemingly China-inspired foreign policies. In this regard, Pol Pot could not escape from China's patron-client orbit and become more heavily dependent on the latter for survival.

The second case study on the causes of the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict and the engagement of Chinese aid examined these issues in three different contexts. It revealed that the Indochina issue involved not only the conflicting countries but also the three great powers-the U.S, the USSR and China- who contested one another so as to inject their respective political and material power into Indochina, Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, the foreign policies and decisions of the three did have a significant impact on the security of the small countries in Indochina. The study notes three crucial events that could have reversed the status quo in this region. These included the split in Sino-Soviet relations in 1969, the Sino-U.S joint communiqué in 1972 and the USSR-Vietnam cooperation treaty in 1978. These events paved the way for the big communist countries to compete with one another for a share of regional influence in the absence of the U.S in Indochina.

Through the examination of Pol Pot's perception of the conflict and the domestic factors, the study notes that the tension and escalation of the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict have resulted from several noteworthy factors. They include the historical and ethnic context and, on-going unresolved border disputes and feeling of mistrust toward negotiation, overconfidence, miscalculation of Vietnamese strength as well as the robust implementation of Pol Pot's policies which had caused a split among Khmer Rouge itself. Moreover, the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict was hard because both countries had different backers, the USSR and China, which also contained each other to exert influence in Indochina for their respective national interests and security.

For the involvement of China's foreign aid in the Cambodia-Vietnam skirmish, the study would like to conclude that the military aid provided to Pol Pot was crucial for the regime to survive. China provided tremendous military supplies to Pol Pot in order to keep him in power so that he could serve China's strategic interests longer.

With strong confidence in China's support for his struggle for independence, Pol Pot felt more motivated and courageous to contain Vietnam by force. This huge support apparently inspired his leadership perception fuelled by extreme nationalism and hatred against Vietnamese ethnicity to lead the country independently so as to get away from Vietnamese influence. In this sense, Pol Pot strongly depended on the Chinese aid to fiercely antagonize Vietnam.

The study is of view that without China's genuine and continued support, Pol Pot could not have any resources to wage a war against Vietnam. Therefore, the Chinese aid and its long-term pledged support extended to Pol Pot was so significant for his regime to contain Vietnam. Even though there was no sign from China to antagonize Vietnam, Pol Pot's aspiration for war against Vietnam was seemingly fuelled by China's long term commitment of support and his radical nationalism to build the country out of foreign influence specially to escape from the Vietnamese influence in annexing Cambodia to the Indochina federation led by Vietnam. Therefore, the aid from China was so crucial for the survival of Pol Pot's regime. Nonetheless, it was only for defensive purpose, and Pol Pot needed to listen to China if he wanted to survive longer. This reflects what Path Kosal has argued "*the Khmer Rouge was just a pawn in China's chess board*".

With regard to the original framework of neoclassical realism theory developed by Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016), the study views that this framework not yet well reflects the case of Pol Pot's regime waging a war against Vietnam. The study agrees that the three independent variables, including external environment, leader's perception and domestic factors are crucial in explaining the state's foreign policy decision and alliance behavior. Nonetheless, the foreign policy making process and implementation as demonstrated by these three authors do not precisely specify the role of the aforesaid independent variables influencing the state's behavior towards the external environment. Therefore, the study proposes that this initial framework be revised in accordance with the specific case of individual state with key focuses on leader's perception, international environment, and domestic issues. Adjusting this initial theoretical framework of neoclassical realism will enhance

the future analysis of any proposed study of a state's foreign policy and its consequences.

## 5.2 Limitation of This Study and Prospects for Future Study

The primary limitation of this study is its failure to identify and describe the involvement of Chinese advisers to Pol Pot. Despite research in document archives, interviews with Cambodian scholars and examination of existing literature, the study cannot identify the roles and positions of Chinese advisers attached to Pol Pot.

The study contends that the roles and position of Chinese advisers to Pot Pot are critical for further discovery of his perception and decision-making process. Though having strong power during this rule, Pol Pot rarely appeared in public and often changed his residence for security reasons. Thus, he might make decisions based on the information and reports from his subordinates which might not reflect the real situation on the ground. Minthz and DeRouen Jr, the authors of *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, remind us that “Advisory groups can shape foreign (and domestic) policy by helping set the agenda, manipulating information, framing alternative courses of action, controlling the flow of information, preventing contradictory and non-supportive information from filtering in, interpreting incoming information for policymakers in certain ways, and serving as gatekeepers” (2010, p. 31). In this regard, advisers attached to Pol Pot seemingly played a significant role in helping him obtain and interpret the information for the policy agenda, decision-making and implementation.

In addition, Path Kosal emphasises that “China's involvement with the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979 is a taboo subject in China for this part of China's history shined a spotlight on its role in supporting a genocidal regime. Chinese researchers are not allowed to write about China-Khmer Rouge relationship”. This taboo means that the study lack inputs regarding Chinese involvement in the Khmer Rouge regime from the perspective of Chinese scholars.

In light of these limitations, the study proposes further research on the extent of Chinese advisers attached to Pol Pot contributing to his foreign policy

formulation and implementation. This proposed research will help clarify the role of China in Pol Pot's foreign policy and leadership.



## REFERENCES

- Alpha History. (2015, July 9). *Chinese Revolution-Kang Sheng*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/kang-sheng/>
- Biography. (2016, February 16). *Pol Pot - Government Official, Dictator - Biography* [The Biography.com website]. Retrieved August 19, 2018, from <https://www.biography.com/people/pol-pot-9443888>
- Bophanna Center. (2017). *Learning on Khmer Rouge History*. Bophanna Center.
- Boraden, N. (2013). *The Khmer Rouge: Ideology, Militarism, and the Revolution That Consumed a Generation*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger.
- Breuning, M. (2007). *Foreign Policy Analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230609242>
- CCC. (1994). *Cambodia's Holocaust* [Cambodian Communities out of Crisis]. Retrieved March 4, 2018, from <http://www.cambcomm.org.uk/holocaust.php>
- Chanda, N. (1989). Civil War in Cambodia? *Foreign Policy*, (76), 26–43.
- Chandler, D. P. (2018). *Brother Number One : A Political Biography Of Pol Pot*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429501982>
- Chandra, V. (2017). Neoclassical realist theory of international politics. *Strategic Analysis*, 41(3), 297–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1295611>
- Chen, I. T.-Y., & Yang, A. H. (2013). A harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory typologies of ASEAN countries' strategies to the rise of China. *The Pacific Review*, 26(3), 265–288. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09512748.2012.759260>
- China White Paper on Foreign Aid. (2011, April). China Foreign's Aid.
- Chinese Law & Government. (2014). Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (November 03, 1978). *Chinese Law & Government*, 16, 13–17.
- CIA Report. (1973, July 20). *Intelligence Memorandum: the Khmer Insurgent Factions and the Influence of Peking, Hanoi, and Moscow Thereon*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA>

- Ciorciari, J. D. (2014a). A Chinese model for patron–client relations? The Sino-Cambodian partnership.
- Ciorciari, J. D. (2014b). China and the Pol Pot regime. *Cold War History*, 14(2), 215–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2013.808624>
- Department of Press and Information Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DK. (1978, March 17). Interview with Comrade Pol Pot. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection
- Diplomat, L. H., The. (2011, December 17). *What was China’s Khmer Rouge Role?* Retrieved September 10, 2018, from <https://thediplomat.com/2011/12/what-was-chinas-khmer-rouge-role/>
- DK Constitution. (1975, 1979). *Democratic Kampuchea Constitution*. Retrieved July 31, 2018, from [http://www.d.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK\\_Policy/DK\\_Policy\\_DK\\_Constitution.htm](http://www.d.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_DK_Constitution.htm)
- DK Letter of Honorary Red Flag. (1977). *Honorary Red Flag Letter to the Central Committee*, 1977. Retrieved August 2, 2018, from [http://www.d.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/Red\\_Flag/Red\\_Flag\\_Honoray\\_to\\_Central\\_Committee.htm](http://www.d.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/Red_Flag/Red_Flag_Honoray_to_Central_Committee.htm)
- DK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (1978, September). *Black Paper: Facts and Evidence of the Acts of Aggression and Annexation of Vietnam against Kampuchea*. Department of Press and Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Ear, S. (2012). *Aid Dependence in Cambodia: How Foreign Assistance Undermines Democracy*. Columbia University Press.
- Ear, S. (2018, July 3). Interview: “Who Wants Cambodia To Be a Province of China?” Retrieved March 11, 2018, from <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/china-debt-03072018162337.html>
- ECCC. (2018, July 31). *It is like what you have commented*. Retrieved from [https://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/%5Bdate-in-tz%5D/E3\\_1604\\_EN-Pub.pdf](https://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/%5Bdate-in-tz%5D/E3_1604_EN-Pub.pdf)
- elainepratley. (2011, August 15). *The Killing fields of Cambodia-* Choeung Ek, Phnom Penh. Retrieved October 30, 2018, from <https://elainepratley.com/2011/08/15/the-killing-fields-of-cambodia-choeung-ek-phnom-penh/>



- Engelbert, T., & Goscha, C. E. (1995). *Falling Out of Touch : a Study on Vietnamese Communist Policy towards an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975*. Clayton, Vic. : Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.
- Etcheson, C. C. (1984). *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (1 edition). Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.
- Far Eastern Economic Review. (1977, October 14). *Pol Pot Plays up to Peking*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D16193
- Gough, K. (1986). Roots of the Pol Pot Regime in Kampuchea. *Contemporary Marxism*, (12/13), 14–48.
- Heder, S. R. (1990, August 28). *Khmer Rouge opposition to Pol Pot: Pro-Vietnamese or Pro-Chinese*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D17520
- Herald-Tribune. (1975, August 19). *Cambodian Says China Vows Free and Unconditional Aid*. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection, catalogue No. D28809
- Herald-Tribune. (1976, January 24). *Air Link Reflects China Role in Cambodia*. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection, catalogue No. D29105
- Hill, H., & Menon, J. (2014). Cambodia: Rapid Growth in an Open, Post-conflict Economy. *World Economy*, 37(12), 1649–1668.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-9701/issues>
- Hinton, A. L. (1998). Why Did You Kill?: The Cambodian Genocide and the Dark Side of Face and Honor. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57(1), 93.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2659025>
- Hutt, D. (2016). How China Came to Dominate Cambodia. Retrieved February 20, 2018, from <https://thediplomat.com/2016/09/how-china-came-to-dominate-cambodia/>
- Hyer, E. (2011). Soft Power and the Rise of China: An Assessment. *China Review International*, 18(1), 6–14.
- Indochina Issue. (1985, December). The Stable War: Cambodia and the Great Powers. *The Center for International Policy, Indochina Project*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D18308

- Julio. (2000). *Sihanouk, Pot Pot and China*. Retrieved from <http://www.dccam.org/Database/Lod/details.php?keyword=D61669&numRecords=100&lang=eng&page=1&idnum=D61669>
- Kheang, U. (2013). Aid Dependence in Cambodia: How Foreign Assistance Undermines Democracy by Sophal Ear (review), (2), 284.
- Khoo, N. (2010). Revisiting the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance, 1975-1979. *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9(2), 321–361.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/156805810X548784>
- Kiernan, B. (2008). *The Pol Pot regime : race, power, and genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*. New Haven, Conn. : Yale Univ. Press, c2008.
- Kiernan, B. (2010). The Demography of Genocide in Southeast Asia: The Death Tolls in Cambodia, 1975-79, and East Timor, 1975-80. *Critical Asian Studies*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1467271032000147041>
- Kiernan, B. (n.d.). *The Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1979*. Retrieved from <https://www.niod.nl/sites/niod.nl/files/Cambodian%20genocide.pdf>
- KR Telegram. (1978, March 12). *Respected and Beloved Brother*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D02068
- Kurlantzick, J. (2007). *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*. The United States of America: Vail-Ballou Press.
- Leng, T. (2017). Small state diplomacy: Cambodia's foreign policy towards Vietnam. *Pacific Review*, 30(3), 328–347.
- Levin, D. (2015, March 30). *China Is Urged to Confront Its Own History*. Retrieved March 12, 2018, from [//sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/30/cambodian-historians-call-for-china-to-confront-its-own-past/](http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/30/cambodian-historians-call-for-china-to-confront-its-own-past/)
- Locard, H. (2005). *Pol Pot's Little Red Book: The Sayings of Angkar*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books.
- Lu, Y., & Lai, H. (2012). *China's soft power and international relations*. Abingdon [England] : Routledge, 2012.
- Mason, R. (2016, February 20). *OECD redefines foreign aid to include some military spending*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/global->

development/2016/feb/20/oecd-redefines-foreign-aid-to-include-some-military-spending

Mertha, A. (2014). *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ministry of Propaganda and Information of Democratic Kampuchea. (1978, June 25). *Press Communique of the Spokesman of the Ministry of Propaganda and Information of Democratic Kampuchea*. Democratic Kampuchea. Retrieved from [https://cambodiatokampuchea.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/1978\\_06\\_dk-note-on-coup-attempt.pdf](https://cambodiatokampuchea.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/1978_06_dk-note-on-coup-attempt.pdf)

Mintz, A., & DeRouen Jr., K. (2010). *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511757761>

Morris, S. J. (1999). *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

New Statesman. (1979, October 26). *China Fall Victim to the Strategy of Its New, Powerful Ally*. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection, Catalogue No. D43778

Ngeow, C. B. (2015). Book Review: Mertha, Andrew: *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 34(1), 139–141.

onlinedictionary.com. (n.d.). *Foreign policy | Define Foreign policy*. Retrieved February 20, 2018, from <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/foreign-policy>

Parker, S., & Chefitz, G. (2018, May 30). *China's Debtbook Diplomacy: How China is Turning Bad Loans into Strategic Investments*. Retrieved July 19, 2018, from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/chinas-debtbook-diplomacy-how-china-is-turning-bad-loans-into-strategic-investments/>

Path, K., Cheunboran, C., Var, V., Kry, S., Terith, C., & Vu Tung, N. (2017). *Cambodia's Foreign relations in Regional and Global Contexts*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Peking Review. (1977, October 7). *Kapuchean Party and Government Delegation Visits China*. *Peking Review*.

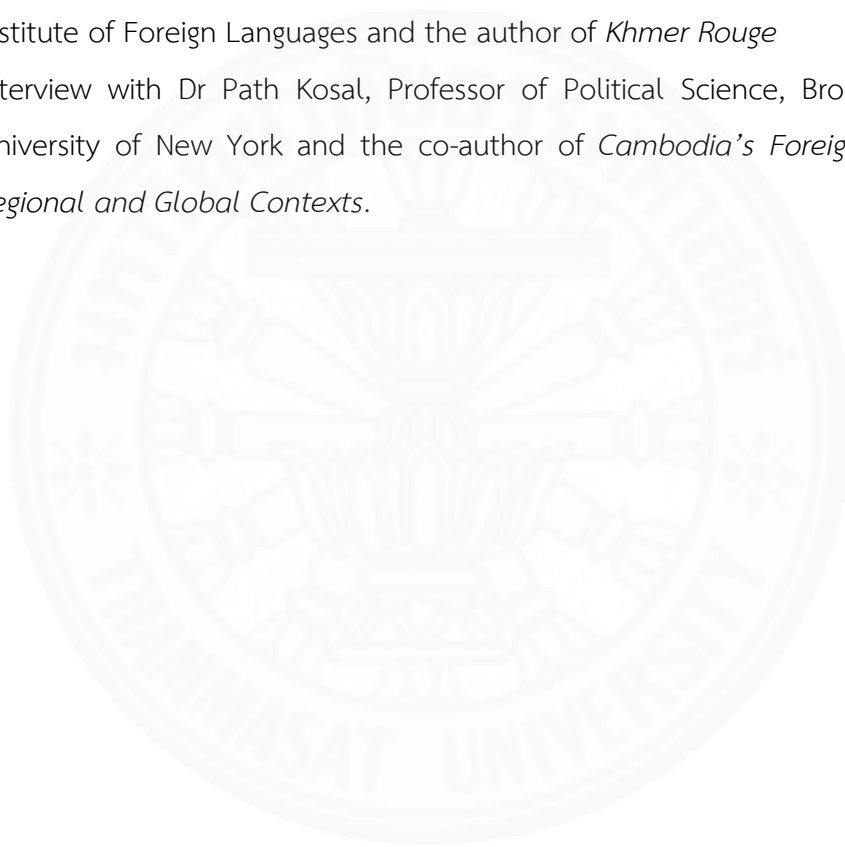
- Peking Review. (1978a, November 10). Chinese Party and Government Delegation Visits Kampuchea. *Peking Review*.
- Peking Review. (1978b, November 17). Viet Nam-Soviet Treaty Threatens World Peace and Security. *Peking Review*.
- Pheakdey, H. (2012). Cambodia–China Relations: A Positive-Sum Game? *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 31(2), 57–85.
- Phnom Penh Post. (2000, April 14). The Chinese-KR connection [Text]. Retrieved September 10, 2018, from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/chinese-kr-connection>
- Pol Pot. (1976, July 28). *Interview with Pol Pot*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D28941
- Pol Pot. (1977, September 28). *The Situation in Cambodia*. Retrieved from DC-CAM, Catalogue No. D29823
- Pol Pot. (1978a, January 17). *The Valiant and Powerful Revolution Army of Kampuchea under the Leadership of the Communist Party of Kampuchea*. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection-catalogue No. D29070
- Pol Pot. (1978b, July 7). *Pol Pot Gives Banquet for Chinese Technicians*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, Catalogue No. D30340
- Pol Pot. (1978c, September). *Let US Continue to Firmly Hold Aloft the Banner of the Victory of the Glorious Communist Party of Kampuchea in order to Defend Democratic Kampuchea, Carry on Socialist Revolution and Build up Socialism*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D40128
- Pol Pot. (1979, January 5). *Statement of Comrade Pol Pot*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D32256
- Port, A. I. (2015). Courting China, Condemning China: East and West German Cold War Diplomacy in the Shadow of the Cambodian Genocide. *German History*, 33(4), 588–608. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghv102>
- Porter, G. (1982, May). Storms Over Indochina: A Political Primer. *The Center for International Policy, Indochina Project*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D18274

- Ripsman, N. M., Taliaferro, J. W., & Lobell, S. E. (2016). *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, J. T., Hite, A. B., & Chorev, N. (2014). *The Globalization and Development Reader: Perspectives on Development and Global Change*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, 51(1), 144–172. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25054068>
- Roy, D. (2005). Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning? *CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA*, (2), 305. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tu.ac.th/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbl&AN=RN174952988&site=eds-live>
- Schweller, R. L. (1994). Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In. *International Security*, 19(1), 72–107.
- Searching for the Truth. (2001, April). Interview with Brother Number One on 12 April 1978. *DC-Cam*, 16. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection
- Segal, G. (1980). China and the Great Power Triangle. *The China Quarterly*, 83, 490–509. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000012935>
- Ta Kung Pao. (1975, August 21). *China-Cambodia economic agreement signed in Peking*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D28816
- Taliaferro, J. W., Ripsman, N. M., & Lobell, S. E. (2009). *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*. Cambridge, U.K. : Cambridge University Press.
- Thayer, N. (2012, November 13). *Lunching with Mass Murderers: The Khmer Rouge Were Not Communists; They were Cambodians*. Retrieved August 20, 2018, from <https://natethayer.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/lunching-with-mass-murderers-the-khmer-rouge-were-not-communists-they-were-cambodians/>
- The Call. (1979, February 19). *Behind China's Counter-Strike in Vietnam*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, Catalogue No. 31438
- The New York Times. (1978, January 19). *China, in Apparent Gesture of Support, Sends Official to Cambodia*. Retrieved from DC-CAM Collection, catalogue No. D16781

- The New York Times. (2015, March 30). *China Is Urged to Confront Its Own History*. Retrieved September 9, 2018, from <https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/30/cambodian-historians-call-for-china-to-confront-its-own-past/>
- The Washington Post. (1975, August 19). *China Grants Aid to Cambodia*. Retrieved from DC-CAM collection, catalogue No. D16416
- Ting Wai. (1987). Soviet Global Strategy and the Specific Role of Vietnam. *Indochina Report*.
- US Department of State. (1975, November 26). *Secretary Meeting with Foreign Minister Chatchai of Thailand*. Retrieved from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB193/HAK-11-26-75.pdf>
- US Report. (1978, October 4). *Vietnam-Cambodia Conflict*. Retrieved from <https://cambodiatokampuchea.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/1978-us-congress-cambodian-vietnam-conflict.pdf>
- U.S-China Joint Communiqué. (1972, February 27). U.S-China Joint Communiqué in Shanghai. *Peking Review*.
- Wagner, R. H. (1994). *Peace, War, and the Balance of Power*. *American Political Science Review*, 88(3), 593–607. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/peace-war-and-the-balance-of-power/27920E27DC26CCCEB722A4D44EB2B1F3>
- Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Webber, M., & Smith, M. (2002). *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World*. Prentice Hall. Retrieved from [https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=sgWtAgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_atb\\_hover&pg=GBS.PT40.w.0.0.197](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=sgWtAgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb_hover&pg=GBS.PT40.w.0.0.197)
- Westcott, B. (2018, May 18). *China using “debtbook diplomacy” to spread its strategic aims in Asia Pacific*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/15/asia/china-us-australia-debt-diplomacy-intl/index.html>

### Interviews with four Cambodian scholars specialized in Khmer Rouge

1. Interview with Mr Youk Chhang, Executive Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)
2. Interview with Dr In Sophal, Lecturer at the University of Cambodia and author of *Cambodia in Vietnam War from 1953 to 1979*
3. Interview with Mr Nhem Boraden, lecturer at the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Institute of Foreign Languages and the author of *Khmer Rouge*
4. Interview with Dr Path Kosal, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College, University of New York and the co-author of *Cambodia's Foreign Relations in Regional and Global Contexts*.





APPENDICES



**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

| No | Questions   | Note |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | What do you think about the relationship between the Khmer Rouge (KR) and China?  |      |
| 2  | What were the types of Chinese aid provided to KR? For what purpose did the Khmer Rouge use this aid?   |      |
| 3  | What was Khmer Rouge's foreign relation at that time? Do you know what its foreign policy was?  |      |
| 4  | What was the relationship of both countries' leaders? How close was it?   |      |
| 5  | Can you describe the characteristic of KH leaders? Pol Pot?   |      |
| 6  | Do you think the Chinese aid is important to the Khmer Rouge?? How important?? (from 1 to 10) ? Why do you think so?                                    |      |
| 7  | What was the relationship between Cambodia and Vietnam during Khmer Rouge's rule? Why did it happen like this?  |      |
| 8  | Do you think KR leaders used Chinese aid to contain Vietnam? Was this aid one of the reasons for break-up of relationship between Cambodia and Vietnam? |      |
| 9  | What do you think the main threat to the Khmer Rouge? To Vietnam? To China? Why do you think so?  |      |
| 10 | Do you have other comments on the Khmer Rouge and China relationship? Or Vietnam-Cambodia relationship?   |      |

## APPENDIX B

### DK FOREIGN POLICY

Democratic Kampuchea fervently and earnestly desires to maintain close and friendly relations with all countries sharing a common border and with all those near and distant throughout the world in conformity with the principles of mutual and absolute respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity<sup>1</sup>.

Democratic Kampuchea adheres to a policy of independence, peace, neutrality and non-alignment. It will permit absolutely no foreign country to maintain military bases on its territory and is resolutely opposed to all forms of outside interference in its internal affairs, and to all forms of subversion and aggression against Democratic Kampuchea from outside, whether military, political, cultural, social, diplomatic, or humanitarian.

Democratic Kampuchea refuses all intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, and scrupulously respects the principle that every country is sovereign and entitled to manage and decide its own affairs without outside interference.

Democratic Kampuchea remains absolutely within the great family of non-aligned nations. Democratic Kampuchea strives to promote solidarity with the peoples of the Third World in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and with peace- and justice-loving people the world over, and to contribute most actively to mutual aid and support in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and in favour of independence, peace, friendship, democracy, justice, and progress in the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> The text extracted from (DK Constitution, 1975)

## APPENDIX C

### USSR-VIETNAM TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION, 1978

Below is the full text<sup>2</sup> of USSR-Vietnam Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Proceeding from the close cooperation in all fields in a fraternal spirit, from the unshakable friendship and solidarity between the two countries on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism.

Firmly convinced that the endeavour to consolidate the solidarity and friendship between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is in conformity with the basic interests of the two peoples and in the interests of the consolidation of the fraternal friendship and one-mindedness among the countries in the socialist community,

In keeping with the principles and objectives of the socialist foreign policy and the desire to ensure the most favourable international conditions for the building of socialism and communism,

Confirming that the signatories to the treaty acknowledge their international obligation to assist each other in the consolidation and preservation of the socialist achievements recorded by the two peoples through their heroic efforts and selfless labour,

Determined to work for the unity of all forces struggling for peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress,

Expressing their iron-like determination to contribute to the consolidation of peace in Asia and throughout the world, and to the development of good relations and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries with different social systems,

---

<sup>2</sup> The full text extracted from Radio Hanoi, VNA, November 3, 1978, in FBIS (Daily Report), November 6, 1978, pp. L6-L9 cited by Chinese Law & Government (2014)

Hoping to further develop and perfect the all-round cooperation between the two countries,

Attaching importance to the continued development and consolidation of the juridical basis of the bilateral relations,

In keeping with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter,

Have resolved to sign this treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and have agreed as follows:

#### Article 1

In keeping with the principles of socialist internationalism, the two parties signatory to the present treaty shall continue to consolidate the unshakable friendship and solidarity and assist each other in a fraternal spirit. The two parties shall unceasingly develop political relations and cooperation in all fields and endeavour to assist each other on the basis of respect for each other's national independence and sovereignty, equality, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

#### Article 2

The two parties signatory to the present treaty shall join efforts to consolidate and broaden the mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic and scientific-technological fields in order to push forward the building of socialism and communism and to constantly raise the material and cultural standards of the two peoples. The two parties shall continue to coordinate their long-term national economic plans, agree upon long-term measures aimed at developing the most important sectors of the economy, science and technology, and exchange knowledge and experience accumulated in the building of socialism and Communism.

### Article 3

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall promote cooperation between their state bodies and mass organizations and develop broad relations in the fields of science and culture, education, literature and art, press, broadcasting and television, health service, environmental protection, tourism, sports and physical training, and others. The two parties shall encourage the development of contacts between the working people of the two countries.

### Article 4

The two parties signatory to the treaty consistently strive to consolidate further their fraternal relations, and to strengthen the solidarity and one-mindedness among the socialist countries on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism.

The two parties shall do their utmost to consolidate the world socialist system and contribute actively to the development and defense of the socialist gains.

### Article 5

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall continue doing their utmost to contribute to defending world peace and the security of all nations; they shall actively oppose all schemes and manoeuvres of imperialism and reactionary forces, support the just struggle for the complete eradication of all forms and colours of colonialism and racism, support the struggle waged by nonaligned countries and the peoples of Asian, African, and Latin American countries against imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism; for the consolidation of independence and the defense of sovereignty, for mastery over their natural resources; and for the establishment of a new world economic relationship with no inequality, oppression, and exploitation; and support the aspirations of the Southeast Asian peoples for peace, independence, and cooperation among countries in this region.

The two parties shall strive to develop the relations between countries with different social systems on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, for the purpose of broadening and consolidating the process of easing tension in

international relations and radically eliminating aggression and wars of aggression from the life of all nations, for the sake of peace, national independence, democracy, and socialism.

#### Article 6

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall exchange views on all important international questions relating to the interests of the two countries.

In case either party is attacked or threatened with attack, the two parties signatory to the treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating that threat, and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and the security of the two countries.

#### Article 7

The present treaty does not concern the two parties' rights and obligations stemming from the bilateral or multilateral agreements to which they are signatories and is not intended to oppose any third country.

#### Article 8

The present treaty shall be ratified and shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of instruments of ratification, which shall take place in Hanoi as early as possible.

#### Article 9

The present treaty shall remain in force for twenty-five years and thereafter shall automatically extend for periods of ten years if neither signatory party declares its desire to terminate the present treaty by informing the other twelve months before the treaty expires.

Done in duplicate in the Vietnamese and Russian languages, both texts being equally authentic, in MOSCOW, this third day of November 1978.

## APPENDIX D

### SINO-AMERICAN JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ IN SHANGHAI, 1972

America visited the People's Republic of China at the invitation of Premier Chou En-lai of the People's Republic of China from February 21 to February 28, 1972. Accompanying the President were Mrs Nixon, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, Assistant to the President Dr Henry Kissinger, and other American officials. President Nixon met with Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of the Communist Party of China on February 21. The two leaders had a serious and frank exchange of views on Sino-U.S. relations and world affairs<sup>3</sup>.

During the visit, extensive, earnest and frank discussions were held between President Nixon and Premier Chou En-lai on the normalization of relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, as well as on other matters of interest to both sides. In addition, Secretary of State William Rogers and Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei held talks in the same spirit.

President Nixon and his party visited Peking and viewed cultural, industrial and agricultural sites, and they also toured Hangchow and Shanghai where, continuing discussions with Chinese leaders, they viewed similar places, of interest.

The leaders of the People's Republic of China and the United States of America found it beneficial to have this opportunity, after so many years without contact, to present candidly to one another their views on a variety of issues. They reviewed the international situation in which important changes and great upheavals are taking place and expounded their respective positions and attitudes.

The Chinese side stated: Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution. This has become the irresistible trend of history. All nations, big or small, should be equal; big nations should not bully the small and strong nations should not bully the weak. China will never be a superpower and it opposes hegemony and power

---

<sup>3</sup> The full text extracted from Peking Review (1972)

politics of any kind. The Chinese side stated that it firmly supports the struggles of all the oppressed people and nations for freedom and liberation and that the people of all countries have the right to choose their social systems according to their own wishes and the right to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of their own countries and oppose foreign aggression, interference, control and subversion. All foreign troops should be withdrawn to their own countries. The Chinese side expressed its firm support to the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia in their efforts for the attainment of their goal and its firm support to the seven-point proposal of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam and the elaboration of February this year on the two key problems in the proposal, and to the Joint Declaration of the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples. It firmly supports the eight point program for the peaceful unification of Korea put forward by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on April 12, 1971, and the stand for the abolition of the "U.N. Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea". It firmly opposes the revival and outward expansion of Japanese militarism and firmly supports the Japanese people's desire to build an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan. It firmly maintains that India and Pakistan should, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions on the India-Pakistan question, immediately withdraw all their forces to their respective territories and to their own sides of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir and firmly supports the Pakistan Government and people in their struggle to preserve their independence and sovereignty and the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for the right of self-determination.

The U.S. side stated: Peace in Asia and peace in the world requires, efforts both to reduce immediate tensions and to eliminate the basic causes of conflict. The United States will work for a just and secure peace: just, because it fulfils the aspirations of peoples and nations for freedom and progress; secure, because it removes the danger of foreign aggression. The United States supports individual freedom and social progress for all the peoples of the world, free of outside pressure or intervention.- The United States believes that the effort to reduce tensions is served by improving communication between countries that have different ideologies so as



to lessen the risks of confrontation through accident, miscalculation or misunderstanding. Countries should treat each other with mutual respect and be willing to compete peacefully, letting performance be the ultimate judge. No country should claim infallibility and each country should be prepared to re-examine its own attitudes for the common good: The United States stressed that the peoples of Indochina should be allowed to determine their destiny without outside intervention; its constant primary objective has been a negotiated solution; the eight-point proposal put forward by the Republic of Viet Nam and the United States on January 27, 1972 represents a basis for the attainment of that objective; in the absence of a negotiated settlement the United States envisages, the ultimate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from the region consistent with the aim of self-determination for each country of Indochina. The United States will maintain its close ties with and support for the Republic of Korea; the United States will support efforts of the Republic of Korea to seek a relaxation of tension and increased communication in the Korean peninsula. The United States places the highest value on its friendly relations with Japan; it will continue to develop the existing close bonds. Consistent with the United Nations Security Council Resolution of December 21, 1971, the United States favours the continuation of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan and the withdrawal of all military forces to within their own territories and to their own sides of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir; the United States supports the right of the peoples of South Asia to shape their own future in peace, free of military threat, and without having the area become the subject of great power rivalry.

There are essential differences between China and the United States in their social systems and foreign policies. However, the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. International disputes should be settled on this basis, without resorting to the use or threat of force. The United States and the People's Republic of China are prepared to apply these principles to their mutual relations.

With these principles of international relations in mind the two sides stated that:

- progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interests of all countries;
- both wish to reduce the danger of international military conflict;
- neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony; and
- neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understandings with the other directed at other states.

Both sides are of the view that it would be against the interests of the peoples of the world for any major country to collude with another against other countries, or for major countries to divide up the world into spheres of interest.

The two sides reviewed the long-standing serious disputes between China and the United States. The Chinese side reaffirmed its position: The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan", "one China, two governments", "two Chinas", an "independent Taiwan" or advocate that "the status of Taiwan remains to be determined".

The U.S. side declared: The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime,

it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.

The two sides agreed that it is desirable to broaden the understanding between the two peoples. To this end, they discussed specific areas in such fields as science, technology, culture, sports and journalism, in which people-to-people contacts and exchanges would be mutually beneficial. Each side undertakes to facilitate the further development of such contacts and exchanges.

Both sides view bilateral trade as another area from which mutual benefit can be derived, and agreed that economic relations based on equality and mutual benefit are in the interest of the peoples of the two countries. They agree to facilitate the progressive development of trade between their two countries.

The two sides agreed that they will stay in contact through various channels, including the sending of a senior U.S. representative to Peking from time to time for concrete consultations to further the normalization of relations between the two countries and continue to exchange views on issues of common interest.

The two sides expressed the hope that the gains achieved during this visit would open up new prospects for the relations between the two countries. They believe that the normalization of relations between the two countries is not only in the interest of the Chinese and American peoples but also contributes to the relaxation of tension in Asia and the world.

President Nixon, Mrs Nixon and the American party expressed their appreciation for the gracious hospitality shown them by the Government and people of the People's Republic of China.

## BIOGRAPHY

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Name                   | Mr. UN Samnang   |
| Date of Birth          | August 28, 1985  |
| Educational Attainment | <p>2017-2018: Master of Arts in Asia Pacific Studies, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand</p> <p>2016-2017: In pursuance of Master of Arts in International Relations, University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia</p> <p>2003-2007: Bachelor of Arts in Education in English, Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia</p>   |
| Scholarship            | <p>2017-2018: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) Scholarship Recipient</p> <p>2016-2017: Scholarship holder of master's degree in International Relations, University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia</p>  |
| Work Experiences       | <p>2014-2017: Deputy Bureau Chief of Europe Department in charge of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) for Cambodia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia</p> <p>2013-2014: Translator/interpreter for Bridge International Translation Company</p> <p>2009-2013: Freelance Translator/ interpreter for Angkhmer Group Translation Company</p> <p>2008-2013: Report writer for the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)</p> |